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Verbatim Report

OF THE

FIVE DAYS' CONGO DEBATE

IN THE

Belgian House of Representatives

(February 20, 21, 28; March 1, 2).

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M. DE SMET DE NAEYER, 1903.

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M. GEORGES LORAND, 1906.

Translated from the Official Shorthand Report, and annotated by

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Issued by the Congo Reform Association, May, 1906.

LIVERPOOL:
JOHN RICHARDSON & SONS, PRINTERS, 14-18, PALL MALL.
1906.

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The Congo Reform Association is in urgent need of funds to continue its work of propaganda and public enlightenment, and appeals for support to all those who realise the great humanitarian issues involved in the Congo question.

Mr. G. HAROLD BRABNER, Hon. Treasurer of the Association, 20, North John Street, Liverpool, will be glad to acknowledge all donations.

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FOREWORD.

HAWARDEN, *May, 1906.*

IT was necessary that the English-speaking world, from whose past and future actions salvation for the Congo peoples will come, if it comes at all, should become acquainted with this historic debate in the Belgian Parliament.

To this end the debate has been translated word for word, and is published, at considerable expense, by the Congo Reform Association, which, since its foundation in March, 1904, has placed before the world a mass of documentary evidence affecting the unparalleled tragedy of the Congo.

Times have, indeed, changed since the Congo Reform Association, working in friendly co-operation with the Aborigines' Protection Society — between whose Secretary, Mr. H. R. Fox-Bourne, and the Hon. Secretary of the Association a cordial and unbroken community of thought had existed in connection with the Congo, long before the Association was formed—came into existence. Abuses, which Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Fox-Bourne had denounced for years, basing themselves upon unofficial testimony, were confirmed by the Report of H.M. Consul in the Congo, Mr. Roger Casement, and by Lord Cromer in the White Book issued in February, 1904.

To Mr. Casement's services in the cause of humanity too high a tribute cannot be paid. His Report vindicated, in a manner as complete as it was striking, the grave step taken by H.M. Government before that Report was received, in approaching the signatory Powers of the Berlin and Brussels Acts, consequent upon the vote of the House of Commons in May, 1903. And never—the time has come to say it—was the choice of a British Government so justified by subsequent events as was the selection by Lord Lansdowne of Mr. Roger Casement to perform the delicate, difficult

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and ungrateful task entrusted to him. The later Report of King Leopold's Commission of Inquiry was confirmatory in so notable a degree of Mr. Casement's Report that a prominent Belgian Statesman, with whom the present writer was conversing some weeks ago, remarked that passages in the Commission's document might have been translated from the Report of the British Consul. Mr. Casement's contribution to a great humanitarian cause has passed into history, and is on record, and it would be strange, indeed, if the country he has served with such distinction, proved ungrateful of his services.

The Congo Reform Association came into being shortly after the issue of Mr. Casement's Report, simultaneously with the birth of the malignant and unscrupulous campaign of mendacity started in Brussels, under King Leopold's auspices, and possessing ramifications all over the world. To meet that campaign, to confound and sterilise it, to spread in ever-widening circles the torch-light of truth, to compel further action and exposure, to embrace all sympathies in all lands in one common protest against an infamous wrong—that was the object of the Association. Its chief weapon was publicity, and to some purpose has it wielded it.

In the first issue of the Association's organ was published the celebrated judgment of the Appeal Court in the Caudron case, which threw so lurid a light upon the administrative system prevailing on the Congo that its publication provoked King Leopold to the promulgation of a special manifesto. The successive revelations of Messrs. Weeks, Scrivener, Harris, Frame, Stannard, Frost, and others, begun in the columns of the *West African Mail*, and continued in the official organ of the Association, together with other documents issued by the Association, were largely instrumental in forcing a Commission of Inquiry out of King Leopold, whose members took out, as part of their impedimenta, the issues in which these revelations appeared. Meanwhile, the Association has taken every possible opportunity to familiarise the public with the fundamental causes of the Congo evil.

Later on, when the Report of the Commission was published, shorn of the evidence placed before it, the Association issued a considerable portion of that evidence in England, in the United States, in Belgium; and in France, through the instrumentality of that large-hearted "Colonial" of repute, Monsieur Pierre Mille.

The Association has made up for limited means by energy, and its propaganda has gone far and wide. To-day it numbers correspondents and sympathisers in every land. Despite abominable imputations brought against it, and its officers, by the paid hirelings of the "Royal Rubber Syndicate," it has had the satisfaction of seeing seeds sown by it ripen into harvests fertilising Public Opinion. Especially has this been the case in America, where the creation of an Association, similarly named, and acting in close co-operation, followed—thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Dr. Thomas Barbour—the visit of the Hon. Secretary to Washington and Boston eighteen months ago, and has received fresh propelling power through the recent tour of the Rev. J. H. Harris and his wife.

The change of Government in this country robbed the Association of the active services of several of its most efficient helpers. Its President, Earl Beauchamp, whose sympathy had been a permanent source of inspiration, received an appointment in His Majesty's Household. Mr. Alfred Emmott, one of the Association's founders, and a tower of strength to the cause, became Chairman of Committees and Deputy-Speaker of the House of Commons. Mr. Herbert Samuel, to whose continuous interest the Association stands greatly indebted, became Parliamentary Secretary for the Home Office.

Severely as these losses have been felt, the Association's work has, nevertheless, gone steadily forward, and extended. To-day that work is half—but only half—accomplished. To-day the consequences of King Leopold's rule upon the natives of the Congo are everywhere admitted, even in the Belgian Parliament, to be atrocious. Ten years' denials have been swept away like chaff. Truth has prevailed. But reform has not come. Until reform comes, complete, thorough, fundamental, the Association cannot sheath the sword, and must rely, as it has done in the past, upon the financial assistance of the Public to enable it to emerge finally triumphant from the greatest humanitarian struggle waged since the days of the over-sea slave trade.

* * * * * * * *

And now a word or two as to this five days' debate in the Belgian House. It is not the least notable because it marks the commencement of the awakening of the Belgian people to a sense of the moral liabilities they are assuming in serving as a cloak to

shelter the infamies of the Congo despotism, over which they have no control, and of which they are, in a measure, the present, as they will be, probably, the future victims. I say the commencement. It is hardly possible to call it more than this, so long as the Belgian House can listen with patience to the orations of the King's official apologists, and so long as denunciation is not followed by action.

Despite the impressive eloquence of Vandervelde and Lorand; despite the revolt against the long "conspiracy of silence" on the part of certain members of the Clerical majority; despite the exclamation wrung from the venerable ex-Minister of State, M. Beernaert, "It is abominable"; despite many encouraging symptoms in the House and outside of it—such, for instance, as the splendid courage of Professor Cattier—readers of the debate cannot fail to be impressed with the wall of apathy, of ignorance, of cynicism which has to be surmounted in Belgium before reform, if left wholly to Belgium to inaugurate, can be said to be within even measurable distance of realisation.

This, indeed, is the predominant impression which a perusal of the debate cannot but have upon the reader, and when to it is added the personality of the Sovereign of the Congo State, drunk with absolutism, cynically defiant alike of Public Opinion and constitutional limitations, impervious to all humanitarian feeling, exposed yet shameless—the outlook is not bright.

As to this, however, the reader who approaches the subject with a mind less concentrated upon it than the translator's must be the judge.

There is another feature of the debate which thrusts itself upon the attention. One rises from a perusal of this discussion impressed with an acute realisation of the extraordinary and basic error which seems to underlie so much of the debate.

It is one of the most curious things in the world that a policy of mere pillage should appeal, thanks to the enunciation of sonorous platitudes, thanks to the abysmal ignorance prevailing in Belgium on the problems of tropical Africa, in the light of a magnificent attempt at State construction, so grandiose in its conception that the now-admitted evils accompanying its evolution seem paltry and trivial.

It is not possible, I think, to read this debate without becoming convinced that, beyond hypocrisy and time-serving, beyond

servility to a Royal will, beyond considerations of party politics on the part of the apologists of the Congo State, there exists among some such, at any rate, a belief that they are defending an idea, ruthless, perhaps, but great; an idea which time will fertilise into a colossal achievement, whose realisation is not in doubt, and whose far-reaching results will shine with added lustre from the criticisms of the hour.

The task undertaken on the Congo is compared with the transformation of ancient into modern Gaul! "Remember, gentlemen," exclaims one speaker, "the origin of all European States." 'Consider," exclaims another, in effect, "the centuries which have elapsed in building up civilisation in Europe, and the evils through which progress had to wade in its onward march. Yet you expect civilisation to become established in barbarous Africa in twenty years."

What magic in that word "State"! What a hypnotic influence it would seem to wield! The "Congo Free State." What does it mean? An internationally independent "State" in course of construction in the Congo Basin by the genius of one man! What visions does it not conjure up for the exercise of inflammable rhetoric! Feed the supply with stories of fine buildings out there on the Congo, "coquettish" towns on the great river, steamers plying the brown waters, railways piercing the forests—with a background of military uniforms, the fanfare of trumpets, the strains of the national anthem, the vigorous beating of the *tom-tom* of patriotism. The mental picture is complete, the imagination runs riot. Mesmerised by a mirage, speaker after speaker indulges in high-sounding, empty phrases, having little or no relation to facts; the outcome, partly of invincible ignorance, partly of misguided ideas, mixing sincerity with insincerity in a confused jumble.

Beside all this fanciful fooling, the grim reality stands out in striking contrast. And therein lies the tragedy; the incomprehensible tragedy of it all.

Twenty centuries it took, we are told, to change barbarous Gaul to modern France. But it has taken only twenty years of King Leopold's civilisation to reduce the population of the Congo so greatly that already these modern civilisers of the Dark Continent, these State-constructors, are speculating upon the future of Central Africa *minus* the black-man.* Statistics have been

* See Captain Baccari's comments on Signor E. Nisco's article in *La Tribuna* of July 5th, 1904.—Official organ of the Congo Reform Association, September, 1905.

published, showing that in sixteen districts, all riverain, the population has fallen from 122,000 to 17,000 in seventeen years, in spite of the fact that the Congo officials have driven people from the bush to replace the dying river-tribes. The extermination of the people in the Kivu and Ruzizi region is noted by Captain Baccari in his report, confirming Grogan's observations some years previously. The Commission of Inquiry admits the decimation of the tribes subjected to the food-tax around the great centres of military activity. The Commission also notes the "partial extermination" of the tribes in the neighbourhood of the caravan routes to the Nile, and Eastern frontier, Italian officers' reports confirming the latter, and the Tilkens revelations of 1903 confirming the former. Campbell's accounts from Katanga are equally emphatic. Restricted in specific particulars as the data regarding depopulation must necessarily be, the entire body of evidence affecting the condition of the native population of the Congo, official and unofficial, points without possible dispute to the same conclusion—the Congo natives are disappearing wherever the State-constructors make their influence felt. They are disappearing by slaughter, oppression, privation, misery, impoverishment, disease.

Yes, this is the tragedy—the immense tragedy—the extermination of a people—and while it is being enacted, the walls of the Belgian Chamber resound with oratorical whirlwinds, such as are here set forth.

State-construction in Tropical Africa, by a Corporation which destroys the African, and pirates his wealth for private ends, for personal enrichment, or to build edifices to Art in one of the capitals of Europe!

What is being constructed on the Congo? What are the constituents of this "State"? Not, assuredly, the people of the land, who have been robbed of everything. The European cannot colonise or people the African tropics! *Nothing* is being reared upon this hecatomb of African lives. The tragedy is serving *no* purpose, save the temporary profit of its beneficiaries. The future is but dust and ashes . . . and shame.

Shame upon those who know and permit. Shame upon civilisation, which stands idly by. Shame upon the rulers of the world, who, like Frankenstein, shrink from dealing with the monster of their own creation.

E. D. MOREL.

FIRST DAY'S DEBATE (Feb. 20th).

M. Vandervelde's Opening Speech.

M. VANDERVELDE (Leader of the Belgian Labour Party):—Gentlemen, the question which I have the honour of bringing before the House is not a party question. It is distinct also from the opinion which each of us may hold as to the advantages or the disadvantages of colonial enterprises in general. I should like, in making this interpellation, to be able to forget my republican convictions, as I should also like you to set aside your monarchical convictions. The whole subject resolves itself into this—whether the system adopted in the Congo does not involve nefarious consequences, as well for the natives, who are its victims, as for Belgium, its alleged gainer. I have brought this question before the house upon many occasions previously. I did so in 1895, when further advances were asked us to pay back the loan which Belgium had not authorised. Then, with M. Lorand, I brought the subject up again in 1900,* then in 1903,† and on two occasions in 1905. You know upon these occasions what was told us. First of all we were confronted with a *non-possumus*. The Congo State was, in so far as Belgium was concerned, a foreign State, so we were told. Then we were confronted with the charge that our action covered republican ideas, hostile to the work of the King. Finally, we were accused of being unpatriotic. We were told that we were assisting an English campaign against the Congo State, and, in the last resort, we were met with the general statement that the testimony which we invoked was exaggerated or untrue. Thus it was that, on the 2nd July, 1903, M. de Favereau, Minister of Foreign Affairs, said:—

"The Congo State can reply with assurance to the criticisms directed against it, for no other nation‡ has done more than it has for the protection of the natives."

And two years after, on the 28th February, 1905, the Minister again said:—

"M. Vandervelde will not listen to the protests which have arisen in America, as in Europe, against these abominable calumnies. They have everywhere provoked denials from those who have lived in the Congo, who know what takes place there, and who, in

* Extracts from this debate will be found in "Affairs of West Africa" (London, Heinemann; Paris, Challamel), by E. D. Morel.

† An extensive report of this debate is given in "King Leopold's Rule in Africa" (London, Heinemann; New York, Funk & Wagnall), by E. D. Morel.

‡ The Congo State as a "nation" is an entertaining thought. The Congo State is represented in Africa by 2,000 aliens to Africa, drawn from every point of the compass, and some 30,000 regular and irregular native troops. It is represented in Europe by the Sovereign, his Secretaries, their clerical staffs, and a Press Bureau.

the name of truth and justice, repudiate with indignation the attacks directed against the Administration of the Congo Free State."

Now, at the very moment the Minister was pronouncing these words, in February, 1905, the steamer which was bringing back the Commissioners of Inquiry was on its way, and was due to arrive at Antwerp. It would be very difficult to-day, I think, to reply to my interpellation by the same arguments. And, first of all, can it be seriously maintained that the State which we subsidise, which we shall inherit one day, which we can take over any day, is to us a foreign State? It has been repeatedly said that the Congo is a Belgian enterprise, and, under these circumstances, it is perfectly natural that Belgium should be interested in what takes place there. If, on the other hand, those who contradict me still wish to refer to my republican convictions, I will answer to-day that those who protest against the Administration of the Congo State belong to all parties. Some of them are Liberals, some are Royalists like Felicien Cattier, others are Catholics and loyalists, like those missionaries* who have felt at length the imperious need of freeing their consciences. A few days ago the following passage appeared in the *Annales du Sacré Cœur*:—

"We do not believe in the conversion of the Congo State, and that is why we should be foolish to suspend or to cease our protests. It is our turn to take the offensive, and we do not need to have recourse to the weapons of calumny and untruth. Truth suffices for us, and there is more of it than is needed to show that the Congo State has not been blackened by Englishmen, Americans, or Italians."

The *Mouvement des Missions Catholiques au Congo* says:—

"We must to-day submit to the evidence which has been produced. Every Belgian should obtain for himself the last number of this Bulletin,† and the last vestige of enthusiasm for the Congo will give place to disgust, which, in its turn, will be translated by a summons to the Congo State, either to place some order in its affairs, and not to continue to compromise everywhere the Belgian name, or to abdicate in the name of humanity, patriotism, and religion."

And if I am told that, in making these charges against the Congo Administration, I am associating myself with a campaign carried out in the interests of England, I reply there is no English campaign. There is a campaign carried on in all countries, by Englishmen like the venerable Fox Bourne, like E. D. Morel, like the Bishops of Durham, Liverpool, and Rochester, like statesmen who are now included in the new Liberal Cabinet; by Americans like Mark Twain and Professor Reinsch; by Italians like Deputy Santini; finally, by Frenchmen like Paul Violet, the learned Catholic jurist, Francis de Préssensé, Pierre Mille, or Anatole France, who said a few days ago only, with regard to the abuses which have taken place in the French portion of the Congo Basin:

"It is necessary for us Frenchmen to denounce first of all the crimes committed in our name; our honour is involved, without reckoning that, speaking of what concerns us, what is our affair, we have a little more hope of not speaking in vain."

I will not, therefore, trouble myself longer with the charge of furthering foreign ambitions. There remains, then, a last argument

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* Roman Catholic Missionaries.

† That is, the *Bulletin* containing the Report of the Commission of Inquiry.

which has been invoked against us, viz., that what we affirm is either exaggerated or calumnious.

Henceforth, gentlemen, the reply to that is easy. But, first of all, I would like to recall what I said a year ago in answer to M. Woeste, who had accused me of being the systematic adversary of the Congo system: —

"I am systematically hostile, I replied, to a system which brings about the abuses which I have described, and, far from excusing myself, I am proud of the fact, and I say that it will have been to the honour of the Socialist party to have defended Belgium against herself, and for having appealed to public opinion in denouncing such occurrences."

M. Woeste: —Public opinion condemns you. It is not with you.

M. Vandervelde: —It is possible that a section of public opinion is still ill-informed, but whatever may be done to prevent it, truth will finally be apparent to the eyes of all, and whatever may be your denials or your silence—for you never reply to our charges—Belgians will finally understand that Belgium owes it to herself, to her international good name, to insist that these abuses which compromise and dishonour her, shall be put down.

Well, to-day, in order to repeat the language we used before, and in order to justify us at the same time from the reproach of having brought before this House exaggerations or calumnies, I have the right of invoking a final opinion, the opinion of the three men of conscience, heart and character, who formed part of the Commission of Inquiry which the British Government compelled the Congo State to send out. When this Commission was appointed, we certainly could not entertain much hope in regard to it. Its mandate had been limited in such a way that the accomplishment of its mission was impossible. It had to act "conformably with the instructions of the Secretary of State." Thereupon a renewed intervention of the British Government took place, with the result that the Commissioners' mandate was enlarged, and it is thanks to that circumstance that we possess to-day documents which my colleague, M. Neujean, was abundantly justified in asking should be distributed, and which every member of the House ought to read. In view of the moral responsibility which weighs upon each of us in this terrible question, I think that those of us who have not read the Report of the Commission of Inquiry have not fulfilled the most elementary duty of the task which the electors of the country have confided in them (applause from the extreme left).

I have said that this document suffices to justify all our charges. I am compelled, however, to make one reserve, because the Report of the Commission is not complete. It contains the conclusion of the Commissioners, and an impartial *résumé* of the testimony which was brought before them, but it does not include that testimony itself. We are told, in order to justify this omission, that a great deal of the evidence brought before the Commission would involve men who would not be in a position to defend themselves, and I recognise that in that argument there is a grain of truth. I should have quite understood the position if the names had been published, but it would have been quite easy to have done what was done in the case of Consul Casement's report in 1903, that is to say, to produce the evidence, without giving the names of the persons affected thereby.

Moreover, the precaution which has been taken not to publish this evidence has been absolutely useless, because evidence produced by the missionaries has been published, and, gentlemen, I only wish you could all read it.*

The Report of the Commission gives us the abstract truth, but not the concrete truth, upon the frightful abuses committed in the Congo. We see at the present moment public sympathy profoundly moved by the murder of a poor little girl in Brussels. What is this crime, however horrible, when compared with the murder of thousands of human beings of both sexes, and of all ages, committed in the Congo by the soldiers of the Force Publique? Moreover, it is probable that the Congo State will not escape the onus of having to publish the Minutes of the Enquiry, because we were able to read a few days ago, in the *Mouvement Géographique*, that Sir Edward Grey, British Minister for Foreign Affairs, has informed Mr. Morel that he intended to call the attention of the Congo Free State to the non-publication of the evidence. Once again will the Congo Free State be compelled to perform a duty which it ought to have accomplished without pressure.

I now come to the Report itself, and I notice that it may be said to be divided into two parts; one part contains praise for what has been done in the Congo in the last twenty-five years; the other is a formidable indictment of the abuses of which the natives have been the victims. To deal with the first part. In a large measure I agree with the praise given. I admire, as do the Commissioners of Inquiry, the immense effort of persevering energy which was necessary to construct the Lower Congo Railway,† to create in this enormous territory a vast system of postal and telegraphic communication, to provide the young colony with a powerful economic machinery. But the real grandeur of the results obtained must make us all the more severe in considering the conditions under which the native population is placed. It has been said many times that the Congo State was formed, above all, with an object of civilisation and humanity. Reference has been made, and with truth, to what has been done to stop the sale of liquor, and, what is more essential, to suppress the slave trade.‡ Nevertheless, we find that, after twenty years, after the cessation

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* This evidence was published by the Congo Reform Association in a pamphlet distributed throughout England and America. It was translated by the Congo Reform Association, and published in the French language, in a pamphlet sent out gratuitously by the Congo Reform Association to every member of the Belgian House of Representatives, and the Belgian Senate, and to every Belgian newspaper, including *Le Peuple*, which reproduced the whole of it, day by day, in its columns.

† Constructed, not by the Congo Government, but by the individual determination of Colonel Thys and his Companies.

‡ The slave-raiding of half-caste Arabs has been suppressed, and the yoke of a new slavery fastened upon the people by the Congo Government, a slavery infinitely more destructive. Moreover, native villages are often compelled to sell members of the community to other villages against food-stuffs required of them by the Congo Government. Again, thousands of slaves are still despatched through Congo territory to the Portuguese ports in Angola. With regard to the liquor traffic, credit is due on this head to the Powers who collectively signed the Berlin Act. The Berlin Act prohibits the importation of liquor into the Upper Congo, just as it prohibited the importation of liquor into Northern Nigeria. A further note will be found on this subject later on, in connection with the Premier's speech.

of internal wars amongst the tribes, after the Arabs have been driven from the territory, when security reigns throughout the Colony,† the population is less numerous than it was before. An attempt has been made to explain this fact. It has been said that the depopulation has been due to epidemics, to smallpox, to sleeping sickness. And certainly, in some measure, this is true; but how can we explain the small resisting power of the natives against these epidemics? It is due to the system forced upon them, and to the inhuman treatment inflicted upon them. Similarly, in our industrial cities, thousands of workmen die from consumption; but why do they suffer more than do the moneyed classes? Because they are poorly fed and ill-treated ‡ (applause from the extreme left).

M. Caeluwaert:—That is very true.

M. Vandervelde:—To support the statement that the depopulation of the Congo is largely due to the system of extortion, of which the natives are the victims, I have the right to invoke the report of the Commission, which shows the frightful gulf which separates a system of rational colonisation, and a system of colonisation such as exists in the Congo. A system of rational colonisation, of ideal colonisation, which up to the present has only been realised in a very incomplete manner, would be to recognise native land tenure, and to recognise to the natives the right of exchanging the products of their free labour on fair terms.*

Now, the Congo system is exactly the antithesis of the system of ideal colonisation which I have described, and I exaggerate in no way in saying that this Congo system is founded upon the confiscation of the land of the natives, upon forced labour, and a system of compulsion which brings about the most frightful abuses.

I say first, upon the confiscation of the land of the natives. This is not a new charge. It was replied to formerly by saying, "The Congo State has respected the property of the natives. It has left them the right of proprietorship over their fields and their huts. It has limited itself to taking that which it was entitled to —the vacant lands—the lands which were occupied by no one." Gentlemen, there is in this statement a flagrant error, not to use a stronger expression. What the natives have been robbed of are not the lands which they have not occupied, but communal property which belonged to their village communities, and which was indispensable to the development of the latter. What has been done towards the Congo native is precisely what might be done to-morrow

† This is a quotation from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, and is, of course, grotesquely inaccurate, as is the statement that inter-tribal warfare has been suppressed.

‡ In other words, the material results of Congo State rule have benefited the white man, but destroyed the natives.

* This system is everywhere followed in the West African possessions of the Powers, excepting in the Congo Basin and in part of the Cameroon territory. It is followed, therefore, in the French Dependencies of Senegal, and the Western Soudan, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, and Dahomey; in the British Dependencies of the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Lagos, and Nigeria; in the German dependency of Togo.

King Leopold did not perpetuate an old system (unless we go back to the time of the Pharoahs), but he invented a new one.

if, in *La Campine* or in the Ardennes, the ownership of the inhabitants in their houses and in their fields which they cultivate was left to them, but if their communal rights, their heaths and the woods over which they preserve their rights of usage, were confiscated.

In the Congo the individual ownership of the natives has been respected, but communal ownership has been suppressed, and this, moreover, is admitted by the Commission of Inquiry.*

"As the greater portion of the land in the Congo is not cultivated, this interpretation of the words 'vacant lands' concedes to the State an absolute and exclusive ownership over virtually the whole of the land, with this consequence, that it can itself dispose solely of all the products of the land, prosecute as a poacher anyone who takes from that land the least of its fruits, or as a receiver of stolen goods anyone who receives such fruit, forbid anyone to establish himself on the greater part of the territory. The activity of the natives is thus limited to very restricted areas, and their economic condition is immobilised. Thus applied, such legislation would prevent any development of native life. In this manner, not only has the native been often forbidden to shift his village, but he has often been forbidden to visit even temporarily a neighbouring village without special permit."

Well, gentlemen, by what name can we call this system? We were taught at school that, under the old *régime*, men were not free, that serfs were attached to glebe land. If this Congo system, which forbids natives from leaving their village and going to a neighbouring village, even for a few days, is not serfdom, what is it? (Interruption.)

M. Anseele:—It is the system which we apply to the cattle on our frontiers!

M. Vandervelde:—And is not the confiscation of the land on which natives exercise their rights of usage, and which they consider as their communal property, an act of spoliation? This, moreover, was admitted recently by a missionary known to many of you, the Rev. Father Cus.

"What are," said he, "the land rights of the natives? Many in these days settle the question as they chose. But it ought to be studied on the spot. Those who have not studied it, 'I repudiate them, even if they are professors of Law.' Natives of the Congo are not precisely nomadic, and, without having the notion of individual property, they have the notion of communal ownership. That, at any rate, is the case where we reside." Q.—"Then the State has nothing?" R.—"I beg your pardon, and I desire that our views should be accurately known. There is in the Congo much land which can be truly called ownerless. The State can with justice acquire this land. That is not all. There is much land over which the natives, living in communities which are not very numerous, claim exclusive rights. Is it just, is it wise, to appropriate those lands without payment?"

Well, gentlemen, what has been made a transaction in all the neighbouring Colonies—in French Congo, Cameroon, and Nigeria—the Congo State has always refused to do, and the consequence of this attitude is described in No. 11 of the *Bulletin des Missions Catholiques au Congo*, in the following terms:—

"Beyond the villages, and a restricted area of cultivated land around them, the entire country belongs to the financial companies or to the Congo State; no one can establish himself therein without their authority, and for the last two years this authority has been systematically refused to the Catholic Missions."†

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* The basis of all native property in tropical Africa is communistic, and individual ownership, save in rare cases, is unknown in native law and custom. Therefore, in suppressing collective ownership, the Congo State has swept away native ownership *in toto*.

† And to the Protestant Missions.

To sum up, therefore, the Congo natives have been despoiled of their land, and the Commission admits that in many places it is impossible for them to trade, because all the fruits of the land belong to the State.†

But this is not all. After having taken their land, forced labour has been imposed upon them. I know that this system of forced labour is disguised under the words "taxation in kind," and we heard lately the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chancellor of the Exchequer‡ declare: —

"Does not taxation, and even the *corvée*, exist in Belgium?"

"Moreover, the taxation in kind established by the Congo State only involves a light imposition. The natives are only asked to provide forty hours labour per month."

Now, when the Minister for Foreign Affairs spoke in this manner, in July, 1903, the laws of the Congo had not, in point of fact, specified any time for the duration of the forced labour imposed upon the natives.* The law of forty hours was then only projected,§ and it was quite arbitrarily that the population was taxed. In certain districts worked by the *Domaine Privé*, the natives were compelled to bring in from four to eight pounds of rubber per month; in the A.B.I.R. district, twelve pounds of rubber per month; in the Mongalla district eighteen pounds of rubber per month.

It was a decision of the Boma Appeal Court which compelled the State to establish a more regular system, which is the law—or, to be more accurate, for we are dealing with an absolutism, the *ukase*—of 18th November, 1903. By virtue of this decree, the native can be subjected to forced labour, which must not exceed forty hours per month, but the Commission of Inquiry, which approves of this, which finds that this imposition is not too heavy, which considers that this forced labour is legitimate, declares at the same time that, throughout the country, the law of forty hours has been outrageously violated.‖

When the Report of the Commission of Inquiry has been distributed to you, I would ask you to give special attention, if you have not already done so, to what the Commissioners have to

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† It is impossible for them to trade *anywhere* in the Upper Congo.

‡ *E.g.*, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Belgium, of course.

* In other words, the system of forced labour which had been enforced in the Congo since 1892 was absolutely illegal, according to Congo State law, and it was only when the publication of Consul Casement's report, detailing this illegal practice, was imminent, that the Congo State hastened to make legal a system which had been illegally applied for thirteen years. Henceforth an illegal iniquity became a legalised iniquity. The term "forced labour" is, of course, a mere euphemism to describe a condition of servitude imposed upon the natives, which has no parallel in modern times, and few in ancient.

§ Yet these Belgian Ministers spoke of it as an existing fact—they repeated what they had been told, *voilà tout*.

‖ And always will be, for if it were applied the export of india-rubber would fall from 5,000 tons to 500 tons in twelve months, and the *raison d'être* of the "Congo Independent State" would cease. King Leopold would, then, be only too delighted to hand over the Congo to the first-comer.

say upon the different forms of forced labour imposed upon the natives. There are four kinds, the tax in ground nuts, the tax in porterage, the tax in food-stuffs, and, finally and specially, the tax in rubber.

I will say nothing of the forced labour in ground nuts, with regard to which it seems that complaints have now ceased, but the Commission notes that the natives are only compelled to this particular labour in a restricted area of the territory, in the Cataracts region, and that, as this trade does not bring in any benefit to the State, it will be probably replaced by another labour tax.

As regards the porterage tax, it is not necessary for me to recall to you the fearful and murderous consequences which it had at the time when the Cataract Railway was being constructed, and before this railway was completed. Thousands of human lives were sacrificed on the road between Matadi and Stanley Pool; but, whatever may be the regrets with which we are inspired by this decimation of the native population, we must at any rate recognise that it has had the result of making the Congo exploitable, and in freeing the natives to-day of porterage *(corvée)* in that particular region. But, if it has disappeared in that region, it has been maintained in others. A porterage service is organised on the one hand towards Lakes Kivu and Tanganyika, and on the other hand towards the Lado Enclave, where, during the last few years, an enormous amount of war material has been accumulated.* Now, the Commission admits, from the reports of a large number of missionaries, that this system of porterage "leads to the partial destruction of the population which is called upon to submit to it."

Then comes the forced tax in food-stuffs. The natives are compelled to furnish various articles for the victualling of the stations, and notably native bread (kwanga). The Commission finds that these impositions are in themselves relatively light; to plant manioca, prepare it, cook it, and carry it are agricultural or household duties to which the women of the country have long been accustomed. But the Commission adds that, in certain regions, where there are military stations, such, for instance, as Coquilhatville and Leopoldville, this system of forced labour in food-stuffs involves the most disastrous consequences to the people. You will at once understand why I take Leopoldville as an example. There are some 3,000 soldiers of the Force Publique there, who must be fed by the natives in the neighbourhood. Now, to procure manioca bread in sufficient quantities to feed the Leopoldville soldiers, villages are called upon to produce it, some of which are situated forty-five miles away! The result is, that the natives who are called upon to furnish the State with material which represents the value of one franc and a half, are compelled every twelve days to travel ninety miles to fulfil their obligations! Assume that to-morrow the people of Huy, Waremme, Dinant, Bruges and Antwerp were compelled every twelve days to bring 1·50 francs to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and you will understand in what

* The conveyance of this war material has cost the lives of thousands of natives.—*Vide* the Tilkens revelations in the debate of 1903.

condition these unhappy natives live, who have no railways to carry them to the place where the tax has to be paid, and back again. But the forced tax in food-stuffs and porterage, and the tax in ground nuts, are, when all is said and done, only accessories to this vast "financial machine," which is called the Congo State. That which is essential, that which gives to the State its revenues, to the Concessionnaires of the A.B.I.R. and the Mongalla, and to the *Domaine de la Couronne*, profits which continue on an increasing scale—is the rubber tax. Here I will not limit myself to a *résumé*, and, since you have not all received a copy of the Report of the Commission, I shall take the liberty of reading to you what it has to say on the suffering involved for the natives in the course of the frantic exploitation of the rubber forests:—

"In the majority of cases, the native must go one or two days' march every fortnight, until he arrives at that part of the forest where the rubber vines can be met with in a certain degree of abundance. There the collector passes a number of days in a miserable existence. He has to build himself an improvised shelter, which cannot, obviously, replace his hut. He has not the food to which he is accustomed. He is deprived of his wife, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and the attacks of wild beasts. When once he has collected the rubber, he must bring it to the State station, or to that of the Company, and only then can he return to his village, where he can sojourn for barely more than two or three days, because the next demand is upon him. The result of this, therefore, is that, whatever may be his activity in the rubber forests, the native, on account of the numerous displacements which he is compelled to undergo, sees the majority of his time absorbed in the collection of indiarubber. It is hardly necessary to add that this state of affairs is a flagrant violation of the forty hours law."

Well, I ask those who used to reply to me that taxation in kind on the Congo was a light imposition, what they have to say in answer to this official admission of the Commission of Inquiry. Remember that these unfortunate natives are compelled every fortnight to spend eight or twelve days in the forest, exposed to the attacks of wild beasts, compelled often to work in swampy ground, waist deep in water, subjected to the supervision of soldiers of the Force Publique, many of whom are heartless wretches, who, in the words of the Commission, "kill without pity all those who resist,"* and you will understand how absurd it was to profess that this system is analogous to the obligations of the *Communes* in Belgium to keep the roads clear, and to the taxation which our own citizens are called upon to bear. Here again, gentlemen, I refer you to the Report of the Commission. You will see what are the means employed to exercise this coercion; the *chicotte*, the hippopotamus whip, which leaves bloody weals on the bodies of those upon whom it is used; servile labours imposed upon the chiefs; the seizing of hostages, which was recommended in 1897, in an official circular by Baron Wahis,† the actual Governor of the Congo State, and finally, what is more terrible than all, the black soldiers of the Force Publique, whose intervention is indispensable to the working of the system. Here is what the Commission has to say on the subject of these black soldiers:—

"According to the witnesses, these auxiliaries, especially those who are stationed in the villages, abuse the authority placed in them, making themselves into despots, claiming the women, and food, not only for themselves,

* And all those who cannot bring in their quota of rubber from forests which are being rapidly depleted of that article.

† And authorised many times since, in circular after circular, by the highest officials of the State, from the Governor-General downwards.

but for the band of parasites and scallywags which the love of rapine associates with them, and with whom they surround themselves as by a veritable bodyguard; they kill, without pity, all those who attempt to resist their exigencies and whims."

This is what was called in the debate of last year the system of "forest guards," to be compared with the peaceful tax-gathering officials of our own country! And when the natives rise against the soldiers, when they reply to violence by violence, what the Commission of Inquiry calls punitive expeditions are undertaken, and here again, for your edification, I am compelled to quote:—

"The order given to a Commandant of a detachment is generally drawn up in the following manner: 'N——— is instructed to punish such and such a village.' The Commission is aware of several expeditions of this type. The consequences are often very murderous, and one cannot be surprised if, in the course of these delicate operations, whose object it is to seize hostages* and intimidate the natives, constant watch cannot be exercised over the sanguinary instincts of the soldiers. When orders to punish are given by superior authority, it is difficult to prevent the expedition from degenerating into massacres, accompanied by pillage and barbarism. Military action, thus understood, always exceeds its object. The punishment, being in flagrant disproportion with the fault, it confounds in the same punishment the innocent and the guilty."

Gentlemen, I ask you all, because, as I said when I began my speech, this is not a party question, but a question of humanity, is there in this House, is there in Belgium, a single man who dares to defend the system of hostages,† sentries, punitive expeditions, and who can say that it is right, that it is just, that it is necessary, when one burns a village, when one massacres its inhabitants, to kill the innocent as well as the guilty, leaving God to recognise his own? (Applause on the extreme left.)

I shall be told that these facts inspire us all with the same horror, only that the Congo State is not in the least responsible for them, that it has always punished those who committed them, that it has published innumerable circulars, in which it instructs its agents to conduct themselves with humanity.‡ To that, gentlemen, I reply that the Congo State is responsible, firstly, because it has tolerated these things; secondly, because it has encouraged them; thirdly, because it profits by them. I say first that it has tolerated these facts, and the Commissioners admit it, because the Report says that the conclusions arrived at were due less to the testimony of natives, or even of missionary evidence, as by the judgments and circulars and the officials' reports, which they

* The hostages thus seized—the practice is, of course, universal on the Congo—are generally women and children. To every factory in the A.B.I R. territory is attached a hostage house, and we know from the revelations in the Tilkens, Caudron, and other cases, that the practice is similar in connection with the stations managed by the direct representatives of the Congo State. During the last two or three years, the same practice has been introduced in the French Congo, following the adoption of the Congo system by the French in that dependency; witness the shocking disclosures of the De Brazza mission, and in particular M. Challaye's book, "Le Congo Français," Paris, February, 1906. Innumerable testimony with regard to this practice has been published by the Congo Reform Association, and may also be found in M. Pierre Mille's book, "Le Congo Léopoldien."

† The Report of the Commission of Inquiry explicitly states that even "distinguished magistrates" on the Congo approve of the system of taking women as hostages for rubber or other demands.

‡ It has also issued, but not published, innumerable circulars and letters, requesting its agents to increase the rubber output.

demanded should be shown them. **Thus, all that has been done has been to admit officially a state of affairs which everyone knew beforehand.**† And when I am told that the authors of the Congo atrocities were prosecuted before the Courts, I take up once again the Report of the Commission, and with it other reports which were communicated previously to the Sovereign King.

On the 15th July, 1900, for instance, the Secretaries of the Congo State reported to the Sovereign King that the "judicial statistics testify to the vigilance with which the Judiciary investigates abuses, and endeavours to prevent any crime from being punished.*

Now, let us see what the Commission says: —

"Abuses committed in the course of the exercise of coercion were very seldom referred to the Judiciary."

In 1900, again, the Secretaries of the Congo State reported to the Sovereign King: —

"The Government does not even hesitate to say that, in the repression of acts of ill-treatment, an excess of severity responds more with its views than does an excess of indulgence."

One could not improve upon this. Let us now see the Report of the Commission: —

"The Commission has found that very often prosecutions, begun by the Assistant Public Prosecutors against white men, accused of having ill-treated natives, have not been followed up, owing to administrative decision."

Owing to administrative decision! Seldom have ill deeds, committed in the course of the exercise of coercion, been prosecuted, and prosecutions begun by magistrates who have had the consciousness of their duty, have been stopped, and yet it is actually urged that the Congo State was inclined rather to excess of severity than to excess of indulgence.‡

I said in the second place that the Congo State had not only tolerated these abuses, but had encouraged them, and I referred a moment ago to the circular of General Wahis, instructing his subordinates to take hostages. I proved last year that the Congo State gave bonuses to its agents on rubber and ivory, on a scale which ensured the larger bonus to the official whose ivory and rubber had cost the least to the State to acquire.§

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† See, further on, the speech of M. Colfs, and the annotations thereto.

* But the Secretaries of the Congo State have taken precious good care never to publish the verdicts rendered by the Judiciary. The only one which has ever seen the light was published first by myself, *e.g.*, the Caudron case (see also Africa, No. 9, 1904).

‡ Be it noted that all King Leopold's officials of the Central Staff in Brussels, who framed these Reports for their Royal master, reports now admitted to have been so flagrantly untrue, have been retained in their positions, and even appointed to the Commission for Reforms!

§ Translated and reproduced in the *West African Mail*.

I do not wish to go back upon facts which were at first denied, which had last year to be admitted, and whose existence the Commission of Inquiry recognises. The Report adds, it is true, that these bonuses have since been suppressed, but we know that they have been replaced by pensions. Now, the officials have no right to these pensions.‡ In order to obtain them they must have rendered services to the Congo State, and it is known what is the primary service demanded of them—obtaining rubber and ivory.

But what is graver even than the bonus granted for the collection of ivory and rubber, is the fact that the State, which had suppressed the slave trade in its territory, has not hesitated to re-establish it in order to obtain soldiers for the Force Publique. Here, in this respect, is the text of a letter, signed by M. Van Eetvelde, Secretary of the Congo State, which was addressed a few years ago to several subordinate officers on their way out to the Congo: —

"The Congo State will allot for each recruit a bonus settled as follows: 90 frs. for every man, healthy and vigorous, and judged fit for military service, whose height exceeds 1 metre 55 centimetres; 65 frs. for every youth whose stature is at least 1 metre 35 centimetres; 15 frs. per male child. The male children must be at least 1 metre 20 centimetres in height, and must be sufficiently strong to be able to support the fatigues of the road. For every married man the bonus will be increased to 130 frs. The bonus will only be due for such men as have been handed over to the headquarters of the various districts."

Another system consisted in giving to the officer a fixed bonus, and then a proportionate bonus, which increased with the low cost entailed in purchasing the soldier. Now, in the early days the natives had some repugnance to entering the Force Publique, so that, in order to secure these recruits, the Officials ordered the chiefs to hand over their slaves. The Officials received them either as a present or bought them, and brought them, often enough in chains, to the stations of the State. I must add, however, that for some time past it has not been necessary to have recourse to such proceedings; the natives have quickly understood that it was better to be a member of the Force Publique than to be subjected to the oppression of the Force Publique. In the report of Consul Casement, he notes a very suggestive statement made to him by a soldier, whom he asked if his life was agreeable to him: "I prefer to be with the hunters rather than with the hunted" (laughter in various parts of the house).

I have, therefore, the right to say that these abominations have been committed in the Congo, have been tolerated and encouraged by the Congo State, and I add that that State is

‡ What M. Vandervelde means is that their contracts with the State do not specifically contain any condition with regard to pensions, the matter of pension or no pension is left entirely to the officials of the Central Bureau in Brussels; in other words, the King, who controls the whole machine. An official who obtains much rubber gets his pension; an official who fails does not. That is how the system works in practice.

responsible for these crimes, because it has profited by them. The beneficiaries of this system, whose only equivalent is to be found in the history of the old Spanish Colonies, is, in the first place, the State itself; in the second place, the Concessionnaire Companies of the State, in which the State holds half the shares; and, finally, the *Domaine de la Couronne.**

First of all the State itself, and awhile ago, when I recognised the great things accomplished in the Congo in the last twenty years, I could not bring myself to forget that the revenue necessary to accomplish them has been obtained from the exploitation of the *Domaine Privé*, which has caused so much suffering, and engendered so much misery. But, apart from the profits realised by the Colony to satisfy the needs of the Colony, there are other profits, which have been acquired by individuals; others, again, which have been employed for objects which have nothing whatever in common with the development of the Congo. As regards, first of all, the profits of individuals, it is well, gentlemen, that it should be known what are the profits drawn by certain parties from the *régime* which I have just described.

I will take two Concessionnaire Societies, the most typical, those which have the most sinister reputation: the Société Anversoise du Commerce au Congo, and the A.B.I.R. In the one, as in the other, the Congo State holds half the shares. The first-named Company, from 1898 to 1903, has paid an average annual dividend of 425 francs to its shareholders on every 500-franc share. That is the Society presided over by our ex-colleague, M. De Browne de Tiège, whom I regret not to see any longer in his seat (laughter on the extreme left).

M. A. Daens:—Most unfortunate!

M. Vandervelde:—I might have asked him, had he been here, if he were still prepared to maintain, as he did two years ago, that the charges brought against him were calumnious. Since then, indeed, the State has, under the pressure of public opinion, suspended for fifteen years the exercise of the concession of this Company.†

Let us now deal with the A.B.I.R. We find that this Company was created in 1892, with a capital of 1,000,000 francs, of which only 232,000 francs were paid up. What has become of these shares, of so small a value? In 1898 each share brought in 1,100 francs in dividends, and was worth 14,600 francs. In 1899 each share brought in 1,225 francs in dividends, and was worth 17,950 francs. In 1900 each share brought in 2,100 francs, and was worth 25,250 francs. In 1901 each share brought in 900 francs, and was worth 14,550 francs. In 1902 each share brought in 950 francs, and was worth 13,400 francs. In 1903 each share brought in 1,200 francs, and was worth 15,800 francs.

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* That is to say, the King personally.

† Which means nothing more than that it has substituted its own regular troops for the irregulars of the Company, and instead of reaping half the profits, probably now reaps a larger proportion still. It is to be noted that the shares of this Company are still quoted on the Antwerp Stock Exchange, and each £20 share is worth to-day about £280.

If you now wish to know what are the proceedings employed in order to secure such profits, you have only to turn to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry:—

"It was hardly denied that in the various Posts of the A.B.I.R. which were visited, the imprisonment of women hostages, the subjugation of the chiefs to servile labour, the humiliations forced upon them, the *chicotte* given to defaulters, and the brutalities of the soldiers employed in getting the prisoners, was the rule habitually followed."

M. Caeluwaert:—It is scandalous!

M. Vandervelde:—Add to this, punitive expeditions, burning of villages, the massacre of natives, hands cut off by the sentinels, either from dead bodies, or from people yet alive, and you know the sources of the riches of the shareholders and administrators of the A.B.I.R.!

M. A. Daens:—It is revolting!

M. Vandervelde:—No doubt these gentlemen would be personally incapable of inflicting such tortures, but they knew what was taking place; they were not ignorant of the proceedings adopted to fill their coffers, and they find that the money they have thus obtained has no scent, not even the scent of blood (applause on the extreme left). The example, moreover, came from on high, for, alongside the territories exploited by this Concession, we have the astonishing creation which calls itself the *Domaine de la Couronne*. A few years ago, M. Beernaert protested with indignation, which then had its *raison d'être*, because we accused the King of the Belgians of having mixed himself up with speculative enterprises. It was the time when Jerome Becker could still write in his book on "African Life," in reporting a visit which he made to Mirambo, the despot of Uniamwesi: "I astonished him a great deal when I told him that, with us, kings are not merchants." If a new edition of "African Life" were ever published, perhaps it would be a good thing to place a foot-note at the bottom of that page (laughter from many Socialist benches).

M. Terwagne:—Jerome Becker might have put that foot-note himself, for he was a very honest man.

M. Vandervelde:—I must assume, gentlemen, that you know what is the *Domaine de la Couronne*. If you do not know, I suggest your reading the very complete volume which has just been published by M. Cattier, Professor of Colonial Jurisprudence at the Free University of Brussels. The *Domaine de la Couronne* is composed, first of all, of a territory ten times the size of Belgium, situate in the rubber region of the Congo, and containing the finest rubber vines in the territory; in the second place, of six mines, which have not yet been decided upon, but which the Sovereign reserves for himself to select, if the day comes when precious metal is found in the Congo; finally, a considerable amount of real estate in Brussels and Ostend, and on the Riviera. How has this domaine been constituted? We do not know. How has it been exploited during the last few years? We do not know either, for no European, save the agents of the State, had entered

it before 1903.* It was only in that year that the missionary Scrivener and Consul Casement made the terrible revelations of what was going on in the domaine of Leopold II. I must add, in all loyalty, that the Report of the Commission admits the gravity of these abuses, but adds that since then the situation has largely improved.†

It is none the less true that, thanks to exactions without number, the *Domaine de la Couronne* has brought in considerable sums to its royal founder. Professor Cattier, not having official documents at his disposal to determine these sums, has been compelled to limit himself to estimates, but by a system of double check, by taking into consideration, on the one hand, the extent of the *Domaine Privé*, of which the production in rubber is known, and the extent of the *Domaine de la Couronne;* by taking into account, on the other hand, the quantity of rubber exported from the Congo, and the proportion of 28 per cent. which the *Domaine de la Couronne* represents to the whole rubber region, M. Cattier concludes that since 1896, that is to say, since its foundation, the *Domaine de la Couronne* has brought in some 70,000,000 francs profit to its founder. I repeat that these are merely estimates; it would be desirable that they should be confirmed. It would be desirable that the Government should furnish us with details on this subject; but in any case we can judge of the tree by its fruits, from the purchases which have been made by the *Domaine de la Couronne* in Belgium and elsewhere. Now, in this respect, the list given by M. Cattier in his book is very instructive. He notes, in effect, that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has bought, in the neighbourhood of Brussels, real estate whose value, assuming, he says, that the Acts of Sale are honest, amounts to 16,385,000 francs, and in the neighbourhood of Ostend of real estate of which the total value is 1,903,000 francs. Altogether, therefore, in these two *arrondissements*—he was not able to continue the enquiry throughout the rest of the country—a total of 18,289,000 francs. I must add that it seems very probable that the enumeration of Professor Cattier is incomplete. It is said, and I think with truth, that alongside the real estate inscribed in the name of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, there is a large amount of real estate, notably in the environs of the *Porte de Namur*, on the spot occupied by the future Walhalla, and, again, in the houses between theBoulevard du Régent and Pepinière Street, inscribed in the name of Baron Goffinet, Steward of the Civil List, which has been bought with money from the *Domaine de la Couronne.* In addition to these, there are properties on the Riviera, the "family estate," which the King possesses on the Riviera, and the Domaine of Cap Ferrat, which were first inscribed in the name of the *Domaine de la*

* Sir Edward Grey recently announced in the House of Commons that the district will be visited shortly by British Vice-Consuls.

† The Commission did not visit any of the territory of the *Domaine de la Couronne.* It merely called at Bolobo, a spot on the river outside the Domaine, which was the starting point of Scrivener's investigating travels. In other words, with the exception of Scrivener's 150 miles' tramp in the small section of the West portion of the *Domaine de la Couronne* (for Casement did not enter the region), no white man, save specially-appointed agents of King Leopold II., has entered the sacred precincts of this royal rubber preserve since it was constituted by secret decree in 1896.

Couronne, but, the French Government having declared that this moral personality was unknown in France, it was necessary to have recourse to the intervention of an Hon. Professor of our Faculty of Medicine, who was kind enough to offer to lend his name to the Sovereign King (laughter on the extreme left). I said lend his name; I did not say lend his assistance (loud laughter on the extreme left).

All this, gentlemen, real estate of the Crown, real estate in the name of the Steward of the Civil List, and real estate on the Riviera, represents some 35,000,000 francs. We have now to ask ourselves what has been done with the revenues from this real estate, and what is the object aimed at in the creation of the *Domaine de la Couronne?* I shall keep myself, gentlemen, from saying that the object pursued was a personal object. I will not lower the debate by saying that the dominating thought of the Sovereign was to enrich himself personally when he constituted the *Domaine de la Couronne.* I am sure, on the contrary, that he was pursuing other ends, that he was associating Belgium with his dreams of grandeur, that he is proposing to make Belgium profit some day from the riches which he is accumulating. But it is none the less true, and it will be easy to establish the fact, that the effect of the *Domaine de la Couronne* upon our public life has been most deplorable.

First of all, M. Cattier notes in his book, that along with the sumptuous works which have been executed with the money of the Domaine, along with Colonial Institutions like the Tervueren Museum, other sums have been expended in paying journalists or newspapers. M. Cattier has been reproached with having exposed the existence of this reptile fund, without giving the names of the papers profiting by it. But you must admit that, in such matters, proof is always difficult. An accident must take place for truth to come out; some fortuitous circumstance must arise, which shall establish as a certainty what was a long time suspected or divined. A few years ago, you may remember, perhaps, that my hon. friend, L. Bertrand, was able to establish a fact of this kind in the case of a newspaper, which was paid by the gambling-houses of Spa and Ostend. We may have asked ourselves a few days ago if a similar exposure was possible in the actual case before us. Certainly there were suspicious rumours. It was observed on many occasions that several newspapers adopted on specific matters an attitude diametrically opposed to those of the Parliamentary party they were supposed to represent. But, in order to change these suspicions into certainties, it was necessary, as I have said, for a fortuitous occasion to arise. Such a one has arisen, and here, gentlemen, you will allow me to read what I have to say on this point, not desiring in any way to improvise upon the facts: —

"Upon his return from Africa, Commandant Lemaire,* having reasons to suspect the management of the *Petit Bleu*, demanded explanations. It was finally admitted that the *Petit Bleu* was

* Commandant Lemaire is one of the few officials of the Congo State who is above reproach. He has never accepted a farthing's commission from the State. His work has, in the main, been concerned with exploration pure and simple.

subsidised by the Congo State, and had drawn 9,000 francs, or 500 francs per month. Commandant Lemaire, irritated by this incorrect proceeding, which had been committed in his absence, compelled the restitution to the Congo State of the sums which it had paid to the *Petit Bleu*. The Congo State having refused to accept them, the sum was distributed between nine charitable institutions."

These are the facts, and now one will be in a better position to understand, perhaps, the violence and the continuity of the attacks which the journal I have cited has indulged in against those which it unjustly accused of being in the pay of Liverpool merchants. Perhaps, to-day, one may be permitted to speak of the traders in consciences of the Congo State (applause on the Socialist seats).* What, however, one must specially note is not the moral position which this paper will henceforth hold in the eyes of public opinion, it is the attitude of a Government which resorts to such means, because, under such circumstances, I feel more incensed against the corrupters than I do against the corrupted (applause on the Socialist benches).

M. A. DAENS:—It is a system.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I may add that it is not only the Congo State which is responsible for proceedings which have been adopted in order to react upon public opinion; the Belgian Government has also some responsibility in this, because it has lent the Congo State its officials, not only to direct the system of exploitation which goes on in the Congo, but also to direct the Press Bureau at home, where semi-official *communiqués* are fabricated, and special pleadings in favour of the Congo State are drawn up.

And this, gentlemen, demands a word of explanation, in view of the extraordinary reply made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the question I asked him last week. I had asked the Minister if it were true that a Belgian Vice-Consul, paid by the Belgian Government, was at the head of the Press Bureau of the Congo. The Minister replied in a long note, in which he referred to a number of things to which I had not even alluded.

M. TERWAGNE:—Naturally, that is his habit.

M. VANDERVELDE:—From this note, it seems that the officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs, who had *formerly*—note this word carefully, gentlemen—served the Congo State, had not received in the course of this service any payment from the Belgian Treasury, but the note added:—

"We have sent two Vice-Consuls on a voyage of exploration to the West African Colonies. Now, the climate of the coast of Guinea has had a deplorable effect upon the Consul at the head of this exploration. After having nearly succumbed to fever in Africa he came home very ill. He asked for a holiday, during which he drew his pay conformably with precedent. This intelligent and very worthy agent will shortly be able to take up once more a foreign post."

* The *Petit Bleu*, which has sought to cover Congo reformers with some of the mud adhering to its own unclean fingers, did not apparently attach a particularly high price to the value of its services!

Gentlemen, those amongst you who have read carefully the reply of the Minister to my question must have come to the conclusion that M. Cattier had made a mistake; that not only was there no Press Bureau, but that no Belgian official, except an agent on leave, was paid at the same time by the Congo State and by Belgium. Unfortunately, what the Minister forgot to say, and what, however, was essential, is that the sick, or rather convalescent, Vice-Consul was improving his health in a Sanatorium, situate No. 41, Pepinière Street, precisely in the offices of the Press Bureau of the Congo State! (Loud applause on the extreme left.) I have the right to say that the responsibility of the present Government is mixed up in this affair of the Press Bureau, because, amongst those who direct this Bureau to-day is to be found the official of the Foreign Office to whom I have made allusion, and yesterday, at the head of this same Bureau, was to be found a judge, a magistrate of the Tribunal of First Instance, who, perhaps, would have condemned us for calumny if, outside this House, we had denounced the facts which I have exposed (loud applause on the extreme left).

M. Van den Heuvel (Minister of Justice):—In what you have just said I detect a possible insinuation (protests from the extreme left).

M. Horlait:—There is only truth in what he has said.

M. Van den Heuvel:—It is desirable that M. Vandervelde should be more precise. Does he mean to imply that the judge to whom he has alluded, has or has not participated in distributing funds to the Press, and in particular to the newspaper which he has just named? (Uproar on the left.)

M. Vandervelde:—The Minister asks me if I know whether the judge in question distributed to the paper named the funds which the latter has received. I said that this judge, receiving a salary from the Department of Justice, was at the head of the Press Bureau of the Congo State. I said nothing more, and it was not an insinuation (hear, hear).

M. Horlait:—It was sufficient.

M. Van den Heuvel (Minister of Justice):—You are trying to get out of it.

M. Caeluwaert:—You dare not deny what M. Vandervelde has said. I challenge you to do so!

M. Lorand:—It is inadmissible that a Belgian magistrate should be at the head of a Bureau for the corruption of the Press. Is the fact true? If it is, it constitutes a scandal.

M. Van den Heuvel (Minister of Justice):—M. Vandervelde cannot maintain his position, all the more so as M. Lorand speaks of a Bureau for the corruption of the Press. Does he maintain that there is a judge at the head of a work of corruption? (Outcry on the extreme left.)

M. Vandervelde:—You know as well as I do that this judge is now no longer at the head of the Press Bureau.

M. DE FAVEREAU (Minister for Foreign Affairs):—I ask you the same question as to the Vice-Consul to whom you have alluded (renewed outcry on the extreme left).

M. CAELUWAERT:—You are about to contradict yourself.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Is the Minister going to assert once again that these facts took place "formerly"?

M. HUYSMANS:—Do you accuse a judge of having distributed money to the Press?

M. ANSEELE:—You are once again supporting the Ministry.

M. PEPIN:—It is ridiculous.

M. VANDERVELDE:—It is my custom to say precisely what I wish to say, and all questions, however cleverly framed, will not make me add one word to what I have just said (applause on the extreme left). I have noted the existence of the Press Bureau paid by the funds of the *Domaine de la Couronne*. I have stated that, at a given moment, a Belgian magistrate was at the head of that Press Bureau.

M. LORAND:—Is this true? That is the question.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I have stated finally that a newspaper of this capital had received money. I have not said anything else, and you will not make me say anything else. I add that this is quite sufficient (renewed applause on the extreme left).

M. LORAND:—Again I ask—Is this true? I repeat that, if it is true, it is enough, and it constitutes an intolerable scandal.

M. VAN DEN HEUVEL (Minister of Justice):—I declare that you are equivocating, and that, notwithstanding my questions, you do not specify anything (protests from the extreme left).

M. CAELUWAERT:—This is too much.

M. TERWAGNE:—You are trying to bring up a side issue, M. Van den Heuvel.

M. PEPIN (addressing the Minister for Justice):—You are not in command of the House. It is M. Vandervelde who is speaking (uproar, the Speaker calls to order).

M. VAN DEN HEUVEL (Minister of Justice):—When an accusation is brought, it should be made categorically (further uproar).

M. VANDERVELDE:—But, gentlemen, it seems to me that it would be much simpler for you to put yourselves down to speak and reply to me. Moreover, whatever may be the specific importance of the debate relating to the Press, I think that the existence of the *Domaine de la Couronne* has consequences of a more general character, and a much more deplorable character for our country than this.

M. VAN DEN HEUVEL (Minister of Justice):—I note with regret that you are getting out of your position, and are passing to another question (violent protests from the Socialist seats, and cries from the extreme left: "It is you who are getting out of it").

M. Bertrand:—You are appropriating the money of this country to allow someone else to carry out a disgraceful job.

M. Vandervelde:—The revenues of the *Domaine de la Couronne* have been used in our country towards the resurrection of a personal power, whose dominating and corrupting influence interferes with the mechanism of our Parliamentary institutions (applause on the Socialist benches). We shall be told, no doubt, that the money of the *Domaine de la Couronne* is profitable to Belgium; that the King has only in view the interests of Belgium; that the property which he acquires will some day return to Belgium; I reply that, alongside the presents which are given us, sacrifices are imposed upon us. Boast, for instance, is made of the present of 5,000,000 francs, which served to construct the triumphal arch, the moneys for which the House refused to vote.* We are told that, at the death of the King, other advantages will be granted us, and there is an attempt to forget that between the Sovereign of the Congo State and the Belgian Government, all that exists is a system of tit for tat.

"I will pay your arch on condition that you give me the tunnel, costing 3,000,000 francs, which connects my Palace at Laeken with the main railway line."†

"I will give you some millions at my death, on condition that you place at my disposal, without interest, the 31,000,000 francs which Belgium has advanced to the Congo State. I will give you later the *Domaine de la Couronne*, on condition that the day upon which you annex the Congo you will take over at the same time its Public Debt."

The result of all this is that, far from profiting, we are running the risk of losing, and that, meantime, the Sovereign of the Congo, who is also the King of the Belgians, escapes from Parliamentary control, can execute such public works as may please him, can spread money broadcast, and spend 30,000,000 francs on the improvement of his Palace at Laeken, saying to himself that, as a last resort, it is Belgium which will have to pay (applause on the Socialist benches).

It is essential, gentlemen, that we should see quite clearly, as far as is possible, into the finances of the Congo State. I say as far as is possible, because, owing to the negligence of the Belgian Government, we are very insufficiently informed. Formerly, in exchange for the loan of 31,000,000 francs, which Belgium made to the Congo State, Belgium had the right to claim information on the financial situation. On this head we received an account of the receipts and expenditure of the Congo State in 1890, 1891, 1892 and 1893. From that date, nothing! And in 1900, notwithstanding the opposition of men like Messieurs Beernaert and De Lantsheere, the Houses decided that the Congo State would no longer be called upon to furnish us with any information, and that its option to contract loans would be henceforth unlimited. What have been the results of this financial emancipation? M. Cattier has endeavoured to calculate them in his book. He has taken the

* This refers to the arch, recently constructed, commemorating Belgian Independence.

† This refers to an underground tunnel, connecting the Palace with the main railway, demanded by the King, and agreed to by the Ministry. The cost for the same was estimated at £120,000. See, further on, M. Bertrand's remarks on this subject.

interest on loans paid each year by the State, and by carefully worked-out calculations he has capitalised them. Here are the results of his calculations. The total amount of the debt was—

In 1898	...	2,283,000	francs.
„ 1899	...	12,533,000	„
„ 1900	...	12,783,000	„
„ 1901	...	15,672,000	„
„ 1902	...	41,973,000	„
„ 1903	...	35,939,000	„
„ 1904	...	55,939,000	„
„ 1905	...	80,631,000	„

And to this figure of 80,000,000 francs must be added the 31,000,000 lent by Belgium, and the net product of the loan on the lottery system—net product which M. Cattier estimates at 50 millions, which makes, independently of the sum lent by Belgium, an approximate total of 130 millions, which represents the debt of the Congo State to-day, a debt which, in the case of annexation, will have to be taken over by Belgium.

M. Bertrand :—Here is the danger!

M. Vandervelde :—Was I right in saying just now that the sumptuary works carried out at Laeken, in Brussels, or in Ostend, are being constructed with the money of the Belgian taxpayer? No doubt, gentlemen, I shall be told that the figures which I have indicated are merely estimates. I recognise it, but let us then be given specific figures. Let us be reassured as to the future. Let us have light upon a situation which ought to pre-occupy us, because, when all is said and done, we are incurring, all of us, a heavy responsibility in allowing, every day, a state of affairs to be aggravated, a state of affairs the consequences of which the Belgian people will ultimately be called upon to bear.

What is particularly deplorable in this state of affairs is, that it seems the 130 millions borrowed by the Congo State have not been utilised in the development of the Colony. Indeed, so far as any value can be attached to the financial estimates published each year by the Congo State, the total deficit of the Congo State has amounted to 27 million francs only. Now, 130 million francs have been borrowed. If we subtract the 27 million francs from the 130 million francs, there remain over 103 million francs, which seem to have been utilised and expended elsewhere than in the Congo. Gentlemen, metropolises have sometimes been known, may still be known, which exploit their Colonies, and make use of the profits derived therefrom to carry out public works elsewhere than in those Colonies. But the Congo State has alone given to the world this strange sight of a Colonial Government which borrows money on its Colony, in order to undertake speculative enterprises in other Continents and in other ways, for instance, in China and in Belgium! I shall not fail, no doubt, to be told, "You are alarmed at this Congo debt, but you forget the other side, namely, the portfolio of the Congo State."

It is true, gentlemen, that the stock which this portfolio contains brings in about the same as, or a little less than, the interest on the public debt. But the majority of this stock consists of

shares in Congolese Companies; there are the shares of the A.B.I.R., of the Anversoise Company, and similar companies. So long as the present system continues, all goes well. As long as the present frantic exploitation of ivory, copal, and rubber continues, all is well. But when the ivory, copal and rubber do not come forward in the same quantities, when the present system of oppression of the natives has disappeared, things will altogether change. Then will the era of deficits commence; then the portfolio will no longer be equivalent to the public debt, and we shall experience all the disadvantages of a state of affairs from which others will have reaped all the profits (applause on the extreme left). This, gentlemen, is the situation from a financial point of view, and I do not think there is any one amongst you who ought not to be perturbed thereby. The situation, I repeat, is all the graver since the temporary prosperity of the Congo State **depends exclusively upon the system of oppression imposed upon the natives**.

Now, gentlemen, this system must disappear; it is condemned to disappear. From the moment that its existence is known, it is doomed. The only question which you have to consider to-day is the direction whence reform is to come. Will it come from the Congo State itself, or from the intervention of the Powers, or, finally, from Belgian initiative?

From the Congo State itself! **In this respect I am profoundly convinced that the Congo State is powerless to reform itself.** The example of Russia proves that absolutism cannot reform itself. It is reformed or it is ended. (Applause on the extreme left.)

I am all the more justified in thinking that this is so when even the **Commissioners of Enquiry**, to whose impartiality and good faith, I have referred **merely propose insignificant measures, mere palliatives. They uphold the system of forced labour, and they adopt the thesis defended a few days ago only, by M. Rolin.* in the Review of the University of Brussels. that coercion is indispensable in tropical regions, that forced labour is necessary, that slavery is legitimate.**

To this opinion, one can oppose another, which is more authorised than that of the Commissioners, than that of M. Rolin. It is the opinion of the Colonial Congress, which held its meetings in Paris in 1900, and which voted as follows:—

> "Seeing that the use of forced labour is undesirable; that it causes a decrease in the native population, and that it is at the same time a danger for public peace, owing to the discontent which it provokes;
>
> "Considering, on the other hand, that it has been demonstrated by experience that the measures taken to prevent the abuses which the use of forced labour entails, are inefficacious and illusory;
>
> "Considering, finally, that only free and remunerated labour gives serious results, and that there is no Colony in which, by sufficient pay, labour is unprocurable;
>
> "RESOLVED—
>
> "That the Colonising Powers shall suppress forced labour, and replace it by free and paid labour."

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* See, further on, M. Lorand's speech, and annotation.

To M. Rolin, therefore, who professes to believe that forced labour is necessary, the Congress of Colonial Sociology, at which he, I think, assisted, replies unanimously that forced labour is not necessary. In his article in the aforesaid Review, Professor Rolin attacked me, because I said that, in defending this principle, laid down by the Congress of Colonial Sociology, I was a radical. The word "radical," in his mind, means a man who considers that slavery is always intolerable, that the taking of hostages is criminal, that punitive expeditions are atrocious, and that it is indispensable to stamp out all disguised forms of slavery. In this respect, it is true, I am a radical, and I am sure that my friend M. Lorand will subscribe to the same sentiments.

But I return to what I was saying just now, viz., the **absolute impossibility of expecting serious reforms from the Congo State, and I find the proof of this in the composition, which is at least strange, of the Commission of Reforms established after the enquiry.** This Commission is composed of fourteen members. Amongst them there are four before whose independence I bow once more. These four are Messieurs. Van Maldeghem, Janssens, Nys* and Davignon.

On the other hand, there are seven who are officials of the Congo State, that is to say, of the principal accused party, namely, Messieurs de Cuvelier, Droogmans, Capt. Tombeur, Capt. Chenot, Gohr, Arnold, and Capt. Liebrechts, who certainly has incurred the largest part of responsibility in the organisation of the system of exploitation of the natives. I find also on this Commission Colonel Fivé, who was the agent of the King in Persia and China, and M. de Hemptinne, of the Kassai‡ Society, and finally, what is almost unimaginable, M. Mols,† Administrator of the A.B.I.R., that is to say, of the Company against whom the frightful crimes related in the Report of the Commission are brought!

It is precisely as though one called in a slave-trader to a conference to abolish the slave trade! Under these conditions, how is it possible to hope that this Commission will bring about serious reforms? I notice that none of the men who have done good work on the Congo form part of it, and I do not find the name of Dhanis, nor do I find the names of Wangermee, Lemaire or Cambier. Neither do I see a solitary representative of the Catholic Missions.

M. Hymans:—It is M. Davignon who represents the Missions! (Laughter.)

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* Maître Nys is a jurist, who has consistently defended, on juridical grounds, the claims applied by King Leopold to the land, the produce of the soil, and the labour of the Congo people, which claims constitute the bed-rock of the Congo system, and the enforcement of which claims is the explanation of the abominations without which that system is incapable of being maintained. See, further on, M. Lorand's comments upon these juridical whitewashings.

‡ In which the Congo Government holds fifty per cent. of the shares, and whose administration it controls.

† M. Mols is on intimate terms with King Leopold. He it is who is interested in and practically controls a number of the so-called "French" Concessionnaire Companies, whose exploits in the French Congo have brought that French Dependency to its present pass.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I do not know if M. Davignon is a representative of the missionaries, or if he is specially qualified for that representation, but I must recognise that our colleague is one of the members of the Commission who takes the reform of the Congo system seriously. But, if it were desired to bring about such reforms, the Commission would be powerless to realise them, because from the very moment when the system of forced labour was abolished, it would be necessary, in order to provide for the deficits of the Budget, to create resources which the Congo State would no longer have at its disposal. **Moreover, there is a fact more eloquent and more conclusive than all the others, which shows that there is no intention of doing anything, and that nothing has been done, and that is, that during the year which has elapsed since the return of the Commission to Belgium nothing has been attempted to improve the conditions which prevail on the Congo.**

Three days ago, I received an important document, signed by fifty-two Evangelical Missionaries, established in the Congo. Among the signatories I find Mr. Grenfell, who was at one time appointed by the King, President of the Commission for the Protection of the Natives. I ask your permission to read this document, because, better than any other, does it give an idea of the actual situation on the Congo. The document in question was drawn up at a conference of missionaries which met at Kinchassa, Stanley Pool. This resolution is dated 11th January, 1906, barely a month ago. This is what it says:—

[Here M. Vandervelde read out the pathetic appeal to civilisation, signed by 52 Missionaries, including Englishmen, Americans, Canadians, Germans, Danes, Swedes and Norwegians. It is useless to reproduce the document here, as the Congo Reform Association has already issued it in a pamphlet, entitled "Will Civilisation Hearken?" which has been distributed to all the Foreign Offices of the Powers, to the more important British newspapers, and to every member of the British House of Commons; and upon which Herr Ludwig Deuss has likewise founded a very nobly-worded appeal to the head of the Civil Cabinet of His Majesty the German Emperor.]

Gentlemen, we did not wait to receive this appeal to associate ourselves with the work of reform undertaken by the Missions. **To-day, Catholic and Protestant Missionaries are agreed in declaring that the events which have taken place in the Congo call for vengeance from Heaven.** They appeal to your humanity and to the Almighty, and I hope you will not be deaf to their request!

These reforms are essential. The present system must disappear. There remains the question of whether it shall be made to disappear by the Foreign Powers, or by the initiative of our country.

Do not be deceived. International public opinion is more irritated against such excesses every day. It is not only the English Government which is moved; in America, in Italy, in France, protests arise daily. A few days ago we saw in the newspapers* a demand for a fresh International Conference, which would

* *Le Temps*, Paris.

compel Belgium to give a definite answer upon the question of annexation, with guarantees for the protection of the natives, and, in case of refusal, to bring about, in the Congo, an International Condonimium. Well, gentlemen, I desire for my country that we should not wait for this initiative to be taken by others, in order to reform the existing state of affairs in the Congo territory. We have therein a more direct interest than others, a moral interest, a political interest, a financial interest; a moral interest because our good name is at stake; a financial interest because I have shown you the ultimate consequences which annexation might one day bring about; a political interest because I am profoundly convinced that many events which have taken place would never have taken place if Congolese absolutism had not reacted upon Belgian constitutionalism.

And I should add that, from the point of view of our international relations, we cannot see, without anxiety, disputes arising such as those of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, which, it is true, concerns only England and the Congo State, but which are, nevertheless, of a kind to place us in a difficult position towards the Powers who are the guarantors of our independence.

I shall be told, no doubt, that we are powerless. I reply, if this is said, that we have means of action upon the Congo State. In the first place, Belgium is a signatory party to the Act of Berlin, and it is incontestable that the proceedings of the Congo State are contrary to Article 6, referring to the protection of the natives. Secondly, the Chambers voted a few years ago the authorisation necessary for the King to be at the same time Sovereign of the Congo State. This authorisation was not a law, is not an article of the constitution. It is an authorisation given by Parliament, and which might be revoked or subordinated to specific conditions of reform. Finally, I have shown upon several occasions that Belgium lends to the Congo State her officers, her diplomatists, her officials. She might at least subordinate a continuation of this to the accomplishment of the reforms which are essential.

We are, therefore, armed. It is not the power to act, but the will to act, which the Government lacks, and I must add that I do not expect much from it, because the characteristic of its policy during the last few years has been complete acquiescence in everything which the Sovereign of the Congo State has done. We were first told that the personal union* would entail no pecuniary liability for Belgium; it entails such liability. We were told that we should have information on the commercial situation of the Congo; that information is suppressed. Finally, Parliament was made to vote the law of 1901, which withdraws from us the right of even asking for such information. Well, gentlemen, what would happen if an event occurred which it is permissible to foresee, for we are all mortal,† from one day to another; without prior knowledge, without the possibility of an inventory, without any precise information upon the financial situation of the Congo State, we

* That is to say, the fact that King Leopold is at the same time King of the Belgians and the Sovereign of the Congo State.

† That is to say, the death of the King.

should be compelled to decide this redoubtable problem of annexation. Who amongst you would be capable of giving, under these conditions, a conscientious and faithful vote? We should know nothing, we should ignore everything, we should not have the elements of knowledge, which we claim for the most modest problem of local interest. Far more than this, we should not even know what would be the system to be applied to our Congolese possession. The Government, it is true, deposited, on the 7th August, 1901, a proposed law upon the government of the ultimate possessions of Belgium, but we have never heard anything more of this proposed law. It has been relegated to the pigeon-holes of the House, together with another project, purporting to place the millions of the Public Savings Bank at the disposal of the exotic enterprises of the King. Nevertheless, the Government had recognised at that time that it was indispensable that the Chamber should undertake to discuss the possibility of eventually taking over the Congo. The following is the view held by the Government, and the preamble of this Bill: —

"We are agreed in recognising that it is highly to be desired that there should be no uncertainty in regard to the system to be applied on the Congo when it becomes a Belgian Colony. The circumstances under which the question of annexation will come up again cannot be foreseen at the present time, but, whatever may be the decision which the Chambers will have to take, it will be greatly facilitated if, when that time comes, agreement has been arrived at as to the method of government to be applied to that Colony."

The urgency of this discussion was therefore recognised. Nevertheless, the Bill has been treated in the same way as the proposed work of reform. It has never been sat on in Committee.

M Huysmans: —And this is the first thing which Parliament must do—study and discuss this Bill.

M. Vandervelde: —After five years we are, therefore, in precisely the same position as we were in 1901. We do not yet know if, when annexation might be voted by the House, the Royal absolutism would be maintained, or whether the Congolese institutions would be given representative control,* and I would add that it is important that we should know, not only the method of administration to be applied to a future Belgian Colony, but also the consequences which might result from annexation, from the point of view of the finances of Belgium. I think, gentlemen, that this is a question which ought to be studied by us from an objective point of view, apart from the opinion which we may have as to the advantages or the inconveniences of annexation. That is why I should desire that, as soon as possible, the House appoint a Commission, instructed to make an enquiry into the financial consequences which might accrue to Belgium from the ultimate annexation of the Congo, and the accomplishment of the necessary reforms to insure the preservation of the native peoples, and the improvement of their moral and material conditions of existence.

Such, gentlemen, are the conclusions which I suggest to the House. They will, perhaps, appear mild in regard to the abuses which we have denounced, but I think that, in the actual state of affairs, they are the only conclusions which have any chance of

* Would be controlled, that is, by the Belgian Parliament.

securing a majority. If the proposals which I have just sketched out met with support on other benches than our own, I would amplify it, or I would leave it to others to do so.

It must be well understood, and I say this to avoid any equivocation, that, in my opinion, such a decision does not prejudge in any way annexation, or the refusal to annex.

In order that such a discussion might be opened under normal conditions, we must, first of all, be informed as to the consequences resulting to Belgium from taking over the Congo. But there is one thing here which I must say, and I now speak in my personal name, without involving the Party to which I have the honour to belong: viz., that of all the solutions which might be proposed—whether it be the abandonment of the Congo or its annexation by Belgium —there is not one, whatever disadvantages it may have, which I do not consider as being absolutely preferable to the maintenance of the actual system existing in the Congo, which must result in the partial extermination of the natives (applause on the extreme left).

It is in this spirit—and you will see that it is a spirit of conciliation—that I have wished to close my interpellation. I venture to hope that, in replying to me, side issues will not be invoked, and that I shall be no longer told that, in denouncing abuses, I am lacking in patriotism. I assert, on the contrary, that when abuses take place, true patriotism lies, not in dissimulating them, but in protesting against them, and I hope the whole House will agree with this.

This is the sixth time that we are interpellating on this question. But it comes before us to-day under new conditions. When we spoke in the past you might not have believed us; you might have suspected our intentions. You had the right to ignore what was not revealed in official documents; but to-day you know, you ought to know, you can no longer ignore, you can no longer remain deaf to the complaints and the protests which arise from all sides—and I address myself to you, members of the Clerical Party. I ask you to forget the links which bind you to the Government, and to cling, above all, to that which your conscience dictates to you. In presence of facts denounced by all ministers of Christianity, Protestant and Catholic, you have no right to remain impassive, and to wash your hands of the blood which has been shed, because, if you were to do so, if you were to refuse justice to the natives, if you were to withhold from them the bread of life which they ask, the words of one of the Fathers of your Church might be applied to you:

"Thy brother asked for help and protection; thou remainest deaf to his appeal; thou hast not gone to his assistance, therefore thou hast killed him."

(Loud applause on the Socialist benches. The orator is congratulated by his political friends.)

NATIONAL UNIONIST ASSOCIATION
REFERENCE AND
9 DEC 1920

Speech by M. de Favereau.

M. DE FAVEREAU (Minister for Foreign Affairs) : —M. Vandervelde has just affirmed that the successive interpellations which he has addressed to the Government on the subject of the administration of the Congo State have never been made under circumstances so favourable to the thesis which he has developed. This assertion astonishes me, gentlemen, because, if an interpellation on the Congo has appeared to me inopportune, it is this particular interpellation. We find ourselves in the presence of the most evident proof of the desire of the Congo State to fill up the *lacunæ*, to correct the faults of its Administration, and to provide the remedies and the improvements which acknowledged facts necessitate.

It is at the very moment when the Congo State has appointed a Commission of Inquiry, in order to throw light upon the charges which have been made against it, at the moment when it publishes the results of its impartial investigations, at the time when it has named a Commission instructed to study practical reforms, it is at this moment that the honourable member associates himself with an abominable Press campaign, which has not hesitated to calumniate* (violent interruptions on the extreme left—uproar).

M. LORAND : —It is your language which is abominable. Everything which M. Vandervelde has advanced is admitted by the Commission of Inquiry.

M. LEONARD : —It is not from our side that calumnies proceed.

M. DE FAVEREAU : —I did not say what you seem to have understood me to say (uproar continues).

M. CAELUWAERT : —No, but that is in your thoughts.

M. PEPIN : —Then amongst the calumniators are to be found magistrates.

M. VANDERVELDE : —Is it I whom you accuse of having been guilty of calumny?

M. DE FAVEREAU : —I said that M. Vandervelde had associated himself, by his speech, with an abominable Press campaign which has not hesitated to calumniate.

M. CAELUWAERT : —It is you who are calumniating.

M. VANDERVELDE : —My statements are based upon official reports, which confound you.

M. DE FAVEREAU : —I will come to the facts, and to the official Report.

M. LEONARD : —Why do you not distribute the Report to the Members of the House?

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* Suppressing the entire evidence—that is to say, every single deposition of European and native witnesses—upon which the conclusions of the Commissioners were arrived at! If that evidence had been published, the futility of the recommendations of the Commissioners would have been apparent to all.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER (Premier, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Minister of Public Works):—The House has just decided that the Report shall be distributed to its members.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—Gentlemen, M. Vandervelde has framed his demand of interpellation in the following terms:—

1. "On the subject of the powers which accrue to Belgium as signatory party to the Act of Berlin of 1885.
2. "As to the disadvantages which result to Belgium from the system of personal union with the Congo State.
3. "As to the placing at the disposal of that State of officers and officials paid by Belgium."

The interpellation was, therefore, introduced in the most clever manner. The honourable member knows the reciprocal juridical situation of Belgium and the Congo State. **He knows that the two Governments are distinct,* and that we cannot be rendered responsible for acts in which we have not participated.**

Therefore, he chose the three points which I have indicated, but which do not constitute the true object of the interpellation, and have simply served to introduce it, because the honourable member could not bring accusations against the Congo State without seeking to involve the responsibility of the Belgian Government. It is thus that he has made a speech in this House in which complaints have been presented with partiality and regrettable exaggeration (violent protests from the extreme left).

M. A. DAENS:—Prove what you are saying. You are declaiming (interruption).

M. DE FAVEREAU:—After having allowed M. Vandervelde to speak without interrupting him, it would be only fair to allow me to reply.

M. P. DAENS:—Speak, then, but do not insult.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—By what right could we intervene in the internal affairs of the Congo State? M. Vandervelde cited Article 6 of the General Act of Berlin, but this Article is drawn up in the vaguest terms. Where, in the Act of the Conference of Berlin, does the honourable member see that the signatory Powers have the right, reciprocally, of controlling the fulfilment of the obligations contained in that article? If the honourable member knew the protocols of that Act, he would be aware that, on the contrary, the endeavour of the plenipotentiaries assembled at Berlin was to respect the sovereignty of the Powers having possessions in the Congo Basin. It would be contrary to all principles of international law that a Government should interfere with the internal administration of a Sovereign State.†

* Foreign opinion, especially American opinion, deluded in part by Baron Moncheur, and the Belgian Consular Service, into believing that to attack the abominations of Leopoldian rule in Africa is to attack the *Belgian nation*, will bear this passage, and M. de Smet de Naeyer's statements (further on), in mind. On April 3rd, in the Belgian Senate, Count d'Ursel asked M. de Favereau to appoint a Belgian Consul to the Congo, to protect in that "foreign State" the interests of Belgian citizens!

† Whose status was recognised by those very Powers, without which recognition there would have been no Congo State.

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M. JANSON:—What is taking place in Morocco?

M. TERWAGNE:—The Minister is visibly embarrassed.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—The duty of a State, having possessions in the conventional Basin of the Congo, is to carry out in its legislation the pledges which it contracted by adhering to the Act of the Conference of Berlin, but when the legislation of that State has carried out these pledges, it has satisfied the obligation contracted. Has the Congo State carried out this duty? On this point I give you the advice of a man whose competence you will not contest—Lord Cranborne, British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, did not hesitate to recognise—

"That, as regards the laws of the Congo State, they leave little to be desired. They are full of regulations with a view of protecting the natives against ill-treatment, and bettering their material condition. There was no doubt that the Administration of the Congo had been characterised in a high degree by a certain kind of progress."*

Gentlemen, it must not be forgotten that the territory of the Congo State is not the only one situated in the Conventional Basin of the Congo. Other Powers have rights therein, which, according to the general terms of the Act of Berlin, would be open to the same necessities of control. If such a pretension, which would not be based upon any specific text, were put forward, it would be evidently contrary to the principles of international law, which were expressed with such good authority by the Duke of Wellington, at the Congress of Verona.

"The Government of His Majesty is of opinion, that to censure the affairs of an independent State, unless these affairs affect the interests of the subjects of His Majesty, is incompatible with the principles according to which the British Government has invariably acted in all questions relating to the internal affairs of other countries."†

If in law we have no right to interefere with the internal affairs of the Congo State, our intervention would be, in practice, as I said just now, if possible, still less justified. I have just recalled that the Congo State had ordered a searching and conscientious enquiry into its internal administration, and in so doing it has followed the example of other countries, which, in analogous circumstances, have not hesitated to adopt the same policy. M. Vandervelde, who has read the work of M. Cattier, has evidently forgotten the passage in which the author admits—"It is but fair to add that the Government of the Congo supported from that time onwards the Commission of Inquiry to the extent of its power." The Commission itself recognised in its Report:—

"During the whole of our stay in the Congo we found, amongst the officials and agents of the State, as well as amongst the trading agents and the missionaries of all denominations, the fullest assistance. Of the documents which the Commission thought it useful to consult, to arrive at the manifestation of the truth, such as political reports, administrative or judicial minutes, copies of letters, private correspondence, all were immediately handed to us at our request, and sometimes spontaneously, without the Commission having been compelled, on any single occasion, to use the rights of search and of seizure which had been entrusted to it."

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* A certain kind of "administrative development" were the words actually used (Hansard, 20th May, 1903). So little was the House impressed with Lord Cranborne's apologetics, that, in the course of this very debate, it passed, unanimously, a resolution demanding that the British Government should communicate with the Powers, with a view to the adoption of measures calculated to put a stop to the "evils prevalent" in the Congo State!

† Why not have gone back to the time of the Deluge for quotations? Moreover, the interests of the subjects of His Majesty *are* affected.

Foreign Governments have also rendered homage to the sincere desire of the Congo State to throw complete light upon its affairs.

M. A. DAENS: —It might, perhaps, be well to postpone the continuation of this discussion until to-morrow, for the Minister is not in a position to reply to us to-day (laughter on the extreme left).

M. TERWAGNE: —You are right.

M. DE BROQUEVILLE: —Let the Minister speak.

M. DE FAVEREAU: —Lord Lansdowne wrote: —

"The memorandum which we have received from the Congo Government proves that the latter has decided to seek the truth by all means which do not imply foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the Congo State."

As you see, it is not only in Belgium, but also abroad—notably in England—that the loyalty with which the Commission of Inquiry was instituted has been recognised. The Commission, moreover, was composed—M. Vandervelde recognised it—in the best way possible, to facilitate the aims which it was called upon to carry out. This is also recognised by the British Government, which, in a letter Lord Lansdowne wrote to Sir Constantine Phipps, said: —

"The high position occupied by the members of this Commission, and their judicial competence, allow me to hope that their investigations will be crowned with success, and characterised by perfect impartiality. After having appointed the Commission, a decree invests the members with the power of hearing all necessary testimony, to draw up reports, and to defer to the Tribunals, if necessary, crimes whose existence may have been established by the Inquiry. The Government of His Majesty relies upon the largest interpretation being given to this part of the decree, and that all the authorities of the Congo State will do their best to facilitate the Enquiry."

It is in this spirit that the Inquiry was conducted in the Congo, with the collaboration of all the officials to whom the Commissioners addressed themselves. We find this testimony amongst one of the most convinced and passionate opponents of the Congo, the Rev. J. H. Harris, who, after having been heard by the Commission, wrote, in a report to the British Consul at Boma, as follows: —

"We think it would have been difficult to have chosen men of a more conscientious and honest character than M. Janssens, Baron Nisco, and Dr. Schumacher; two secretaries, Messieurs Denyn and Dr. Gregoire, are very devoted men, and we are particularly grateful to the latter for the patience and ability which he displays as interpreter. M. Janssens shows himself full of courage in undertaking, at his age, such a work. His patience each time that we wished to put a question to the witnesses was most remarkable. This applies, moreover, to the other members of the Commission."*

This, gentlemen, is the homage which has been rendered by one of the witnesses before the Commission, by one of the most determined opponents of the Congo Administration. The desire of the Congo State to throw light upon all the charges to which its Administration has been subjected, is further evinced by the fact of the constitution of the Commission, by the fact that it was instituted, by the way in which it has accomplished its mission, by its Report. This attitude is re-affirmed by the nomination of a Commission of Reforms, appointed in view of examining the

* No one has ever suggested that the Commission displayed other than strict impartiality in taking evidence.

conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry, and their practical application. The honourable member criticised very strongly the composition of this Commission. He said it only includes four members who are not mixed up with Congolese matters, and too many officials; but is it not necessary, in carrying out an examination which bears upon administrative reforms, that the people who by their functions are the best informed on the object in question, should be listened to, and should be able to give advice on the applicability of the proposed reforms?

M. VANDERVELDE:—Do not the missionaries know what has taken place in the Congo?

M. DE FAVEREAU:—Would it not have been wiser and more equitable to have waited until the Commission of Reforms had accomplished its labours before pronouncing its condemnation? The speech of the honourable member overlooks a fact, which appears to me to overshadow the whole situation. It is not possible to remove a population from the frightful barbarism in which it has grovelled for so many centuries, whose morality is often low and degraded, without compelling it to make a considerable effort to which its characteristics and its inveterate habits are opposed.

M. A. DAENS:—The means chosen is extermination.

M. LORAND:—Quite so.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—Absurd!

M. LORAND:—The results of the Commission's inquiry prove it. The population is exploited to such a degree, by such methods, that depopulation is rapid; that is what the impartial men who composed the Commission have recognised.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—M. Vandervelde suggests to the Belgian Government various means of action in regard to the Congo State. I have given the reasons which are opposed to our intervention, reasons of law and of fact.

M. MANSART:—Refuse your officers.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—M. Vandervelde said that we might cancel the authorisation given to the King in 1885 to be Sovereign of the Congo State.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I said that we could subordinate the maintenance of that authority to the realisation of reforms.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—It may be conceived that, when the proposal was first mooted by M. Beernaert in 1885, doubt should have been entertained as to the consequences which the proposal might have upon the international situation in Belgium. These apprehensions were given expression to at the time in the two Houses, but, as you know, gentlemen, they were not supported, and the law was voted with virtual unanimity. After twenty years are these doubts still justifiable, when the union of the two crowns has caused no confusion, no error, in the domain of international affairs? To-day, a long experience proves that the practice has no inconveniences attached to it (ironical laughter on the left and on the extreme left).

M. LORAND :—You are poking fun at us.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Very well—state what these undesirabilities are.

M. LORAND :—They are palpable. There are not only undesirabilities; there are scandals and crimes.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Mention the difficulties.

M. LORAND :—I have only to read from the Report of the Commission, which is full of admissions of abuses, scandals and crimes, to be found on every page of the Report.

M. MANSART :—The Minister has not read the Report!

M. DE FAVEREAU :—From the international point of view there are no difficulties.

M. LORAND :—Under such conditions it becomes useless to discuss with you.

M. A. DAENS :—Then you have read nothing.

M. LORAND :—You are reciting to us a lesson which you have learned in advance, and, under such conditions, all discussion is useless.

M. A. DAENS :—Robbery, violence, rapine, oppression—is all this nothing?

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Your generalities prove nothing.

M. A. DAENS :—But there are the facts! You have read nothing!

M. DE FAVEREAU :—You have given no facts.

M. LORAND :—Your attitude is pitiable (laughter on the extreme left).

M. BERTRAND :—But you have no pity for the natives (renewed laughter).

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Gentlemen, I repeat, the personal union has brought about no inconveniences, and no confusion, from the international point of view.. M. Vandervelde spoke of the dispute which has arisen between the Congo State and England in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. We think that the interpretation of the Convention of 1894 has given rise, on various occasions, to an exchange of views between the two Governments. We are not aware of the stage which these negotiations have now reached, but we have no reason to doubt that the two parties concerned, in a common spirit of conciliation, will succeed in bringing about a satisfactory solution. M. Vandervelde has told us to withdraw our officers and officials in Congo State service. Under all Governments, at all periods of our history, the Belgian Government has consented to place its officers and its officials at the disposal of foreign States, and would you refuse to lend your help to a State which has been founded by our Sovereign, and for Belgium, when you grant that assistance to China, to Persia, and other countries which demand it? No, gentlemen, no one will understand such language. The Congo, watered with Belgian blood, must remain a Belgian work.

M. DELPORTE :—So, now it is a Belgian work? A moment ago you said it was a work with which we had nothing to do (laughter on the extreme left).

M. DE FAVEREAU :—A work in which many of our countrymen have devoted heroic effort, and even their lives.

M. VANDERVELDE :—You have not completed your reply to my question.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I am coming to it. The honourable member recalled, in a very incomplete way, the question he had addressed to me. I may be allowed to read it to the House, and the House will judge that my reply was an adequate one. Here is the text of the question :—

"In his book upon the administration of the Congo State, M. Cattier, Professor at the University of Brussels, expresses himself in the following manner, upon the subject of the *Domaine de la Couronne* :—

1.—PRESS BUREAU.—This Bureau is situate in the offices of the Central Government (of the Congo State) at Brussels.

It was first of all directed by a Belgian judge placed at the disposal of the State by the Belgian Government. To this Bureau was also attached a Belgian Vice-Consul, paid by the Belgian Government. This official has been sent to the various English Colonies on the West Coast of Africa, to make an enquiry into the lot of the native peoples. It is the Press Bureau which draws up the majority of articles which appear in the newspapers which are friendly to the Congo State.

2.—SUBSIDIES TO THE BELGIAN AND FOREIGN PRESS.—It is fair to recognise that a certain number of Belgian papers belonging to the three great political parties have resisted the solicitations of the State and the seductions of the gold from the *Domaine de la Couronne*.

"Are these facts accurate? In the affirmative, does the Minister think that the State can lend its officials to the Congo State for the purpose of fulfilling, at the cost of the Belgian taxpayer, functions which are absolutely foreign to their normal employment?"

I could not reply to the part of the question which bore on facts which have nothing to do with my Department, and of which, moreover, I was ignorant. I, therefore, contented myself with meeting the facts which were within my competence, and this is what I did, in a very clear and very precise way. As regards placing at the disposal of the Congo State, officials connected with the Belgian Foreign Office, I recalled the Administrative rules of my Department. I added that, at the present moment, there were only two officials, connected with my Department, who had asked to be relieved of their functions, in order to be placed at the disposal of the Congo State, and I concluded by saying that the Consul who had been sent on a mission on the Guinea Coast had returned ill, that his health was compromised, and that under these conditions it was only just and humane—the honourable member, who concerns himself so greatly with the health of the natives, should not complain if I have some regard for the health of a very meritorious agent—to grant him leave. If this official prefers, in his leisure time, during his convalescence, to combat the abominable Press campaign to which I referred a moment ago (violent interruption on the extreme left), he is doing the work of a good patriot, and I can only congratulate him (uproar on the extreme left).

M. VANDERVELDE :—You admit, then, that an official of the Belgian Government was employed on the Press Bureau of the Congo State, and drew up articles against the adversaries of an abominable system, which you dare not defend here?

M. LORAND :—And you congratulate him!

M. DE FAVEREAU :—No, no. I did not say that (interruption on the extreme left).

M. LORAND :—Is it true, or is it not?

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I said that if this official . . .

M. VANDERVELDE :—If the statement were not true, you would long ago have denied it.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I said that if this official, during his convalescence, and when on leave, used his spare time in defending the Congo and Belgians against the charges of a hostile Press, he only deserves congratulations (protests on the extreme left). That is my view. You are naturally free to have another.

M. LEONARD :—You are in a quandary.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It is scandalous.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I shall not return to the analysis which M. Vandervelde has made of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. The honourable member has had the time to prepare his speech, and he presented the Report of the Commission of Inquiry to this House under the most unfavourable aspect towards the Administration of the Congo. All those who have read this Report will see that there is on the part of the honourable member a studious desire to exaggerate.

M. VANDERVELDE :—And the Catholic missionaries—are they animated by the same desire?

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Moreover, M. Neujean asked a little while ago that the Report should be distributed. All of you, gentlemen, will be in a position to read it, and to judge for yourselves. No doubt the Administration of the Congo has given rise to grave and regrettable abuses.

M. A. DAENS :—Crimes!

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Nobody denies it. I cannot discuss all these points to-day. There is one, however, which I hasten to take up. The honourable member said that the communal property of the natives had been taken from them.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It is the Commission which says that.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—But the honourable member omits to say that the Commission only asks for the just interpretation, and the equitable application, of the laws confirming the tenure of the natives in the land which they occupy through the authority of their Chiefs.* The significance of this conclusion will not escape you, and the Commission recognises that if legislation had been applied in the spirit in which it had been ordered, it would have prevented the abuses pointed out in the Report, and brought before this House by the honourable member. M. Vandervelde thinks it unjust to compel the natives to collect various quantities of rubber. Here five kilos., there 15 kilos. . . .

* If M. de Favereau had been asked to explain the meaning of this sentence, he would assuredly have been unable to do so.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I said nine kilos. Moreover, it is the Report of the Commission of Inquiry which gives this figure.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—Do not let us attach so much importance to figures for the moment. I note that you criticised the various amounts of rubber which natives are pledged to bring in.

M. VANDERVELDE:—The criticism is in the Report of the Commission! (Laughter on the extreme left).

M. DE FAVEREAU:—The honourable member forgets to add that, if the Commission noted the fact, it did not, as far as I can remember, condemn it. It could not do so, seeing that all the regions are not equally rich in rubber vines, and that to compel the natives to furnish an equal quantity throughout the country would have been unjust and iniquitous.

M. VANDERVELDE:—The Commission condemned the excessive nature of the coercion placed upon the people, in the matter of rubber, throughout the entire country.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—That is another question.

M. VANDERVELDE:—It is the question.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—Speaking of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, the honourable member made use of the book of M. Cattier, which is very vague . . . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—Then be more precise.

M. DE FAVEREAU:— . . . and very erroneous. Not knowing the revenues of the *Domaine de la Couronne*,* M. Cattier made sundry calculations, taking as a basis various hypotheses, to establish the amounts. He arrives at a figure between 70 and 80 millions of francs for the last ten years. This sum is evidently very exaggerated. Even the basis of the calculations is erroneous, for the various regions of the Congo are not equally rich in rubber vines. It is, however, on the total product of the harvest of rubber, and on the total extent of the territory of the State and of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, that M. Cattier bases his calculations. He says that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has been worked since 1896. Now, this is an error, and a new source of exaggeration. The exploitation of this Domaine dates from a very much more recent period.† We may, therefore, say of all these calculations, that they have not a leg to stand upon (protests from the extreme left).

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* Be it noted that the existence of an enormous section of the Congo territory, known as the *Domaine de la Couronne*, and whose revenues are not paid into the Treasury of the Congo State, is nowhere denied by the official defenders of the State throughout this debate. That is the capital point. Yet, as recently as September, 1903, M. de Cuvelier, King Leopold's principal Secretary of State, penned the following sentence, in a Memorandum actually communicated to the Powers, including Great Britain: "All the receipts of the Domaine are paid into the Treasury!!" M. de Cuvelier's ideas of truth are more primitive than those of the Congo natives, whom the official *communiqués* drawn up by him are never tired of representing as confirmed liars.

† A portion of the *Domaine de la Couronne* was, at any rate, in full exploitation nine years ago, the year in which the atrocities of Lieut. Massard began to be perpetrated. The *Domaine de la Couronne* was created in 1896.

M. BERTRAND :—What is the exact figure?

M. VANDERVELDE :—If you say that the figure is inaccurate, you must know the accurate figure. In that case loyalty compels you to tell us what it is.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—**I do not know what it is.** (Ironical laughter from the extreme left). But I can assert that the calculation is erroneous, because the data which have served as its basis are inaccurate.

M. LORAND :—Once again do you calumniate, without knowledge, and obviously by order (protests from the right). You do not appear to have any proper appreciation of the significance of the word "calumniate."

M. DE FAVEREAU :—The honourable member . . .

M. LORAND :—You are not entitled, without calumniating, to declare that a figure is inaccurate, when you declare at the same time that you do not know what the real figure is.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—You have no right to declare that a figure is accurate when the calculations are erroneous.* I repeat that the basis upon which the calculation has been established is false (protests from the extreme left).

M. LORAND :—You know nothing about it. You can say that you think that the basis is inaccurate, but you have no right to declare that the figure is inaccurate, when you say that you do not know what the figure is.

M. VANDERVELDE :—Either you know, and you are dissimulating, or you do not know; and in that case you have no right to speak as you are doing (applause from the extreme left) (protests from the right).

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Indeed! Have I not then the right to answer you?

M. A. DAENS :—You will find it difficult.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Am I not allowed to reply to questionable statements like those which you produce?

M. VANDERVELDE :—When a figure is inaccurate, it should be rectified.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Here is another inaccurate figure. M. Cattier, and M. Vandervelde quoting from him, maintains that the loan on the lottery system has brought in 50 millions of francs to the Congo State. Is it permissible to make such a statement, after the formal declarations made by my honourable colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, barely eight months ago? The loan has brought in, at the most, seven or eight millions.

M. BERTRAND :—*Allons donc!* †

M. VANDERVELDE :—150 million francs have been loaned, in order to obtain eight million francs net! Who is going to believe such a thing?

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* A mere statement by so obviously ill-informed a Minister carries no weight.

† *Anglice*, "Absurd."

M. DE FAVEREAU :—If you had studied the question, you would understand it better.

M. VANDERVELDE :—I know it probably better than you do (approving laughter from the Socialist benches).

M. DE FAVEREAU :—And, you will observe, here again is an error. It is assumed that the whole of the loan has been issued, which is untrue.†

M. LEONARD :—This is too much!

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I will conclude in a moment. M. Vandervelde spoke to us of a possible International Conference. I do not know to what he makes allusion. The only question before me at the present moment is the question of revising the Convention of 1899, on the spirit trade in Africa. I conclude, gentlemen.

M. DELPORTE :—You are doing the right thing, because the honourable members on the right are weary.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I regret that, in the heart of the Belgian Parliament, a work like the Congo enterprise, which redounds to the honour of those who have devoted themselves to it body and soul, should be attacked by the leader of one of the Parliamentary Parties, who is thus furnishing weapons to those who are conducting an abominable Press campaign against this grand work.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It is the Commission of Inquiry which furnishes those weapons, not I.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—I am glad that the House has resolved to distribute the Report to each of its members. I ask them to read it with calmness and impartiality, and to purge their judgment of all passion.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It is not necessary to comment it.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—And to take note of it without partiality.

M. ROGER :—The partiality lies with you.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—This grand work is above your attacks.

M. LEONARD :—This is absurd. All that you are saying is foreign to the debate.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—It is above contemptible attacks, both by the spirit which has inspired it and by the thought which has dictated the improvements and the reforms to be incorporated in it.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It is not above the duties of humanity.

M. DE FAVEREAU :—Thanks to the labours of the Commission of Inquiry, thanks to the labours of the Commission of Reforms, it will be possible to give to our future Colony an Administration which will bear comparison with that of the best administered Colonies.

M. VANDERVELDE :—Now you are associating yourself with the abominable campaign of calumny of which you speak! I ask to be allowed to ventilate a personal matter.

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† The whole of the loan *has* been issued, 10 millions in 1888, 60 millions in 1889, and 80 millions in 1902.

(THE SPEAKER:—M. Vandervelde is in command of the House.)

M. VANDERVELDE:—I would ask the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, who accuses me of having associated myself with a campaign of calumny, to tell me who are the calumniators to whom he alludes?

(THE SPEAKER:—The Minister for Foreign Affairs is in command of the House.)

M. DE FAVEREAU:—I did not say M. Vandervelde had associated himself with calumniators.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You said that I had associated myself with a campaign of calumny.

M. DE FAVEREAU: I said that the campaign carried on by organs of the Press was calumnious.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Which organs?

M. DE FAVEREAU:—Conducted in a spirit of abuse, and not hesitating before calumny. They are only too well known.*

M. VANDERVELDE:—It is necessary that you should give their names. We will then reply.

M. WOESTE:—No catechisms!

M. VANDERVELDE:—Then no insinuations.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—I will reply notably that bogus photographs have been published in illustrated papers† (laughter on the right).

M. VANDERVELDE:—I only know one pamphlet in which a series of facts, which were evidently untrue, were put forward, and in which fabricated photographs were incorporated. This was a pamphlet published by a certain Captain Burrows, and came before the British Courts. Now, as soon as this pamphlet was published, we immediately denied all connection with Captain Burrows, but we have since asked ourselves if this publication had not been a trap, and if the Congo State had not itself raised up an adversary who could be so easily confounded (ironical laughter on the right).

M. HOYOIS:—And when you asked yourself that, what did you reply to yourself? It would be interesting to know.‡

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* A tribute to the *West African Mail!*

† M. de Favereau is here evidently referring to the issue of the official organ of the Congo Reform Association for September, containing a series of photographs of mutilated natives, taken by Mrs. Harris, and some of the subjects of which appeared before the Commission of Inquiry. These photographs were alleged by *l'Etoile Belge*, the subsidised *Petit Bleu*, and other papers, more or less in relation with King Leopold's Press Bureau, to have been fabricated. Absurd as was the accusation, Mrs. Harris, at our request, made a formal declaration before the Marquis of Bath, the Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Somerset, testifying to the genuineness of the photographs (the negatives of which are mostly in this country). This declaration was reproduced in the Brussels paper *Le Peuple*, but the scurrilous charge has never been withdrawn by King Leopold's scurrilous organs; and it has been reproduced in the French and German papers subsidised by the Congo State, and doubtless in papers of other countries.

‡ It would be also interesting to know how it comes that the publisher of Capt. Burrows' book has not been called upon to pay a penny of the damages inflicted by the British Court, which I understand to be the case.

SECOND DAY'S DEBATE (Feb. 27).

M. VERHAEGEN (*Catholic*), M. BERTRAND (*Socialist*), M. WOESTE (*Catholic : head of an important section of the Clerical Party*), M. COLFS (*Catholic*).

Government communication.

M. VAN DEN HEUVEL (Minister of Justice): —Gentlemen, on the evening of the 20th February, I received this letter from a distinguished judge of the Tribunal of First Instance in Brussels. The following is its text: —

"Brussels,

"20th February, 1906.

"I have just listened to the speech of M. Vandervelde, and the "speeches of some other orators at the sitting this afternoon, relating to "a magistrate of the Tribunal of First Instance. As certain persons might, "perhaps, conclude from these declarations that the magistrate in question "was head of a Bureau instructed with distributing 'funds to the Press,' "or what has been called a 'Bureau of Corruption,' I desire, if this inter-"pretation were given to these statements, to reject it immediately, and "with great energy, and to oppose to it the most categorical denial. I "think it my duty to inform you of the fact.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) ROLIN,

"Judge of the Tribunal of First Instance."

M. DE FAVEREAU (Minister for Foreign Affairs): —Gentlemen, I have also received a letter from the Vice-Consul, accused by M. Vandervelde at the sitting of last Tuesday. It is as follows: —

"*M. le Baron*,—In the course of the speech pronounced by M. "Vandervelde at the sitting of the House last Tuesday, some of his words "have been interpreted as attributing to me the direction of the 'Bureau "of Corruption of the Press.' I oppose to this interpretation the most "formal denial.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Signed) GOFFART,

"Vice-Consul for Belgium."

On a Motion for order.

M. VANDERVELDE: —Gentlemen, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have just read out to the House two signed letters, one by M. Rolin, Judge of the Tribunal of First Instance for Brussels, the other by M. Goffart, Vice-Consul for Belgium. The signatories of these letters declare that it would be unjust to assert that they have directed a Bureau for the corruption of the Press.

It is sufficient to read the speech which I made last week, in order to see that these two denials are illusory, and that I made no such accusations either against M. Goffart or M. Rolin. What I said was that they were at the head of the Press Bureau, **and the fact is not denied.** I did not say that the funds distributed to the Press had been distributed by them personally; in point of fact, those funds were distributed by other persons.

Continuation of the Debate.

THE SPEAKER: —We now resume the Vandervelde interpellation. M. Verhaegen is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Verhaegen.

M. VERHAEGEN:—Gentlemen, M. Vandervelde, in interpellating the Minister for Foreign Affairs "on the duties incumbent on Belgium as signatory Power to the Act of Berlin, 1885," based himself, on the one hand, on Article 6 of Chapter 1 of the said Act of Berlin; and, on the other, on the Report of the Congo Commission of Inquiry. I shall indicate presently the extent to which I think myself justified in associating myself with the protests which the honourable member has brought against the acts and the abuses pointed out by the Commission of Inquiry, respecting the Administration of the Congo State, acts and proceedings which have undoubtedly **shaken public opinion in Belgium to its depths.** Before dealing with this part of my speech, I desire, however, placing myself also from the point of view of Article 6 of the Act of Berlin, to examine the duties which are incumbent upon Belgium towards the Belgian missionaries who go to the Congo. Article 6 of the Act of Berlin is precise:—

"All the Powers shall protect and favour, without distinction of nationality or creed, all religious, scientific, or charitable Institutions and enterprises. Christian missionaries, scientists, explorers, their escorts, their goods, their belongings, shall be the object of special protection."

I do not overlook the fact that the Act of Berlin does not authorise the signatory Powers to intervene in the affairs of the Congo State. This rule must give way when the essential interests of their subjects are affected. The Foreign Minister recognised, by quoting the principles of international law, and by invoking in this connection the authority of the Duke of Wellington at the Congress of Verona. "The Government of His Majesty," said the noble Duke, "is of opinion that to censure the internal affairs of an independent State, unless the essential interests of the subjects of His Majesty are affected, is incompatible with the principles according to which the British Government has invariably acted on all questions relating to the internal affairs of other countries."

Now, such is precisely the case which faces us in relation to the Belgian missionaries on the Congo. Amongst the essential interests of those citizens, professional honour, which is their sole property on this earth, figures in the front rank. I shall attempt to convince the House that Belgium cannot remain indifferent to the essential interests of her citizens. Catholic missionaries, nearly all Belgians, hastened to comply with the appeal of the Congo State, which answered at the same time to the suggestions of their own hearts, and proceeded to Central Africa. They settled in the spots assigned to them without any thought of the dangers of the climate. Young and old rivalled one another in ardour, hard for themselves, tender for the unhappy natives, a splendid band, before whom I bow with respect, recruited from all social classes, and amongst whom I note the son of our sympathetic colleague, M. Van Naeman; the missionaries have laboured incessantly on the Congo; much money has been spent by them, through the charity of Belgian Catholics. They have sacrificed their health; many have died, or have only returned to die.

What did they go out there for? To collect ivory, rubber, or gold? Better than that. To receive substantial salaries? To receive honours, or a name on the scroll of history? Better still. They have received, and they receive every day, the blessings of the natives. They bring the word and the love of God to the land of Africa. They are expanding Christian civilisation in the Congo—that is to say, the civilisation which has made Europe. Thanks to the missionaries, thanks to the King, who opened the road for them, and who appealed to them, deserving, therefore, the gratitude of all civilised humanity, millions of negroes, plunged in an abyss of degradation, have seen the light which the Saviour brought into the world. They have heard, and they have had practised towards them, the law which dominates, and which at the same time summarises, all divine teaching, "Love one another." Thanks to the missionaries, native customs in the regions which they evangelise have become purer. The secular humiliation in which woman is placed has been altered for a higher ideal, family life has taken hold in the Congo. Monogamy has become respected. The native begins to understand that from the law of work a higher social standard emanates. Christianity will put an end to the material and moral degradation of populations plunged for many centuries in the backwash of barbarism. I do not wish to uselessly prolong my speech, but the House will allow me to point out a single example of the zeal and success attained by the Belgian missionaries. The small town of Baudouinville, founded near Lake Tanganyika by the White Fathers, numbers to-day 300 families, formed of young negroes and negresses, whom the White Fathers and the nuns have brought up and inured to labour. Monogamy is the absolute rule, and produces its beneficent results. Whilst, under a polygamous *régime*, black women have usually only one child,* the three hundred young couples have alone increased the population of Baudouinville to 1,700 souls, and it seems that the process continues (laughter on the extreme left).

To these 1,700 souls have been added 300 other natives from regions not worked by the missionaries; the 2,000 inhabitants of Baudouinville cultivate, without any coercion, a thousand *hectares* of land, and enjoy a material prosperity, which is increasing, and which will develop if the State grants them other land. Gentlemen, is not this a magnificent result? And should we not desire that many cities like Baudouinville should exist on the Congo? Will it not be due to such enterprises that civilisation will penetrate rapidly, in a durable fashion, in the land of the black man? A few figures will permit the House to realise the work accomplished by the Belgian missionaries.

Catholic missions in the Congo include at this moment 119 Priests, 51 Fathers, 88 Nuns, or a total of 258 Missionaries, divided among the White Fathers, the Premontrès, the Trappists, the Missionaries of Scheut, the Jesuits, the Redemptorists, the Fathers *du Cœur de Jesus*, apart from the congregations of women. These missionaries control 23,000 Christians whom they have baptised; they instruct 54,000 Catechumens, and give instruction to more

* A highly questionable statement, to say the least. The census is also somewhat remarkable.

than 9,000 children. They have 48 principal schools, 460 secondary schools, farms, chapels, agricultural colonies, apart from their hospitals and their schools. They receive from Belgian Catholics proof of the interest which the latter have in the Congo Missions, and spend each year more than £24,000; 120 missionaries have died on the field.

What figures cannot show, is the admiration which is inspired in the native by the apostolic life of these religious men, the veneration and the confidence with which the latter are surrounded, the prodigious influence exercised upon the natives by the absolute unselfishness of which the missionaries give an example. Such, gentlemen, is the secret of their power. They are expanding the field of civilisation, without coercion, solely by their moral ascendancy, and one can say that they alone really civilise the native, because too often certain servants of the State, and certain agents of the Companies propagate around them nothing but terror and hatred.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You are associating yourself, my dear colleague, with an infamous campaign of calumny!

M. VERHAEGEN:—If you will wait a moment you will find that I shall associate myself, presently, still more directly to what you humorously call an infamous campaign of calumny. My intervention is, for me, a question of conscience, and, moreover, I have never thought that your speech was a campaign of calumny.

M. A. DAENS:—You are right to speak the truth.

M. VERHAEGEN:—How weighty is the testimony, gentlemen, coming from men who are not of the Catholic faith, which confirms the statements I have just made! Listen to what Commandant Lemaire, who spent more than ten years in the Congo, has to say:—

"Amongst magistrates, officers, agents of the State, and other white men in Africa, there are some good, some medium, and some indifferent; but amongst the missionaries there is only one class—the good. If I mention them, you are compelled to believe me, because I am not a believer. I am even an infidel in the fullest sense of the term. One often hears of civilisation; but the true civilisation is that to which the missionaries consecrate their lives out there."

Here is the testimony of another officer, who is also a Freethinker. I find the evidence in the *Carillon d'Ostende:*—

"In the Congo the missionaries are the only ones who work and civilise. One sees them with the negroes, cultivating their fields, instructing their children, teaching them arts and crafts, and all this with an unselfishness which all Europeans have been able to admire . . . No, the missionaries do not abuse the natives. Without them, civilisation would not have made one step forward on the Congo."

Not less specific is the opinion of the celebrated traveller Jerome Becker, already referred to. Commenting, in his book, "The Life of Africa," on the easy and enviable lot of the English missionaries, Jerome Becker adds:—

"The lot of the Roman missionary is not nearly so agreeable. The Catholic Father who expatriates himself to bring the good news to barbarous peoples, knows that the only help he can rely on is that of his own industry. His devotion will never be accounted to him in any profits. It is, therefore, his task alone which enthuses him, and makes him accomplish prodigies. He has not only to take with him his Bible and his Breviary, but he will use the plough of the peasant, the axe of the pioneer, the saw of the contractor and the builder, and the hammer of the engineer."

But there is another testimony, more important and still more authorised than those which I have cited; it is that of a dignitary of the Anglican Church, Canon Isaac Taylor, who in an article entitled "The Failure of Missionaries," and published in the great English periodical, *The Fortnightly Review*, thus expresses himself:

"And our methods are not only opposed to success, but they are absolutely false. We must return to the methods which were crowned with such marvellous triumphs in the centuries which saw the conversion of the Roman Empire."

"'To evangelise Africa,' wrote General Gordon from Khartoum, 'we must have apostles, men who, having abandoned everything—understand me well, everything—men who are dead to the world.' And General Gordon, zealous Protestant that he was, never met anyone, unless it was a Roman missionary, who realised his ideal of the apostolic missionaries. In China he saw Protestant missionaries, receiving comfortable salaries of £300 a year, and preferring to stay on the coast, where they enjoyed European society and British comfort, whilst Roman priests left Europe without any hope of return, and lived in the interior of the country with the natives, living their lives. These missionaries are very far from their own country, without wife or child or salary, without comfort of any kind, without European Society. That is why the priests succeed, as they deserve, while the Protestant missionaries succumb."

All those who are interested in Congo affairs have read the comparison which M. Charles Buls, ex-Burgomaster of Brussels, has drawn between the Catholic Missions and the Protestant Missions of the Congo in his "Croquis Congolais." I will not read this to the House, but I feel I must mention the following lines, in the *Belgique Coloniale*, by M. Réné Vauthier, who is not a Catholic:—

"What strikes one at first sight, in regard to the Catholic Missions, is the apostolic character which their action manifestly shows. However much one might wish to do so, one could not attribute to the latter any other object than that of voluntary renunciation, suffering and sacrifice, lightly accepted, in view of rewards not one of which will directly or immediately affect the author of the good work at all. Pleasure is reduced to the success of the work of proselytism; it is merged, so to speak, with the spiritual exaltation procurable through faith."

I might recall, also, the recent praise which Colonel Thys, whose competence no one will discuss, has showered upon the missionaries, especially those whom Monsignor Stillemans sent to the Congo during the construction of the railway, but I intend to limit myself, and I conclude with quoting from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry the following sentence, which, while not constituting praise, is, nevertheless, the finest testimony which can be given to the Congo missionaries:—

"The missionary listens to the native, helps him according to his means, makes himself the echo of all the complaints of the region; hence the astounding influence which the missionaries possess in some parts of the country. It exercises itself, not only amongst the natives within the purview of their religious propaganda, but often of the villages whose troubles they have listened to. The missionary becomes, in the eyes of the native of the region, the only representative of equity and justice."*

* It is a pity, purely from the point of view of truth, and not from the point of view of the respective merits of Catholic and Protestant missionaries, that M. Verhaegen did not read out the *whole* paragraph of the Commission's Report, from which the above is a quotation. We give, herewith, the opening sentences of the said passage, which were suppressed by M. Verhaegen:—

"Often, also, in the regions *where Evangelical stations are established*, the native, instead of going to the magistrate, his only protector, adopts the custom, when he thinks he has a grievance against an agent or an executive officer, to confide in the missionary."

The above paragraph shows clearly that the Commissioners, in rendering this tribute, were rendering it, not to the Catholic missionaries at all, but to the Protestant missionaries! *De gustibus non est disputandum.*

What I wish to establish, in placing before the House these numerous testimonies, is that the missionaries deserve all the praise which their conduct has won for them from men of independent character, who have not Catholic convictions. What the missionaries deserve, I say, is that particular care should be taken by those who are called upon to pass an opinion upon their actions to discern truth from error, and to judge sanely and with impartiality. And it is necessary to say this, for we find that, without having weighed and checked the value of the documents and of the testimony they received, the three very distinguished men whom the Sovereign King instructed to make an Inquiry into the conditions of the Congo State, blame severely the Catholic missionaries, while they praise the Protestant missionaries,* who, as a rule, have very little sympathy for the Congo State. They also praise the arch enemy of Catholic propaganda—the Protestant missionary, Bentley, now deceased. By what double aberration of heart and of intellect did men of incontestable probity, men, whose high and proud independence I bear witness to, consent to blame, without serious inquiry, without contradictory examination, the Catholic heroes, the only civilisers of the natives, the finest champions of the civilising idea which presided at the foundations of the Congo State. How could they cover with flowers the enemies of the work of the King—the Protestant missionaries, who devote the greater part of their time in preaching that English supremacy is the one source of prosperity and happiness open to the peoples of the Congo State,† and in running down as far as possible the Congo State.

I cannot explain such an attitude. Perhaps it is due to a prejudice, too common, alas, among certain very distinguished and very honest men, who call themselves Freethinkers, and who lose impartiality, freedom and even lucidity of spirit immediately it is a question of appreciating Catholic works.

M. Vandervelde:—I should, however, point out to you that M. Schumacher‡ is a Catholic, and not a Freethinker.

M. Verhaegen:—I do not know the personal opinion of M. Schumacher, but I cannot find any other explanation than the one I have given, and I still ask myself how it can be that men so distinguished as those who carried out the inquiry, should have passed such an opinion on the subject of the missionaries, without examination, and in the absence of all serious control. However that may be, I do not propose to defend at any length the missionaries against the attacks levelled at them. Fearing lest their honour should be affected by unanswered calumnies, they have defended themselves so conclusively, that the members of the Commission of Inquiry must to-day regret that portion of their report. The missionaries have shown, in effect:

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* Yes, in the above passage so ingeniously transposed by the honourable member! It was a Catholic, not a Protestant Commission.

† M. Verhaegen would be hard put to it to produce reliable data to substantiate this assertion. Moreover, as the Protestant missionaries—be they all that the Hon. Member considers—are now proved *to have spoken the absolute truth*, the Hon. Member would have exhibited a *modicum* of Christian charity in acknowledging the fact.

‡ The Swiss member of the Commission of Inquiry.

That the scholastic establishments do not violate either the spirit or the text of the law; that the young married scholars are not separated from their wives; that the adult scholars are not kept in the missions by force; that the scholars are not ill-treated—we cannot call ill-treatment the paternal application of slight corporal chastisement (ironical laughter on the extreme left), when in England, to cite only one example, this means of correction is still employed in all the schools of the country, and that the interested parties themselves do not protest against the practice. The missionaries have also demonstrated that the natives inhabiting the Chapel farms are not kept under strict tutelage; that the natives who have left the missionary schools possess their tools in their own right, and that the produce of their plantations and their poultry belongs to them; that those who are protected by the missionaries receive, when of age, the authority to marry; that it is odious to assert that the object of the missionaries is to obtain abundant labour—this is the worst of the charges—and that the philanthropic objects aimed at are thus gravely compromised. Finally, they have shown that the wise rules which the members of the Commission of Inquiry traced out for themselves, were not observed by them in regard to the Catholic missionaries. Not a single one of the charges formulated by the Commission of Inquiry against the missionaries remains. It is true that a few days ago, a new accuser arose, M. Felicien Cattier, in his book on the situation of the Congo State, reproaching the Catholic missionaries, in a passage which I shall read fully to the House:—

"It is from a higher point of view that the missionaries must be judged. For thirteen years they have seen applied around them, with all its consequencies, the system of the labour tax. They have seen the population decimated; they have assisted, impassive, at the burning and pillage of villages. They have held their peace, and have only had during this long period, praises for the State. Their newspapers only published panegyrics of the Sovereign King, 'victorious' replies to the calumnies of Protestant missionaries. For this error there is no excuse."

This act of accusation falls into two parts:—

1. The missionaries witnessed abuses committed by the State, and held their peace.

2. Their newspapers published nothing but panegyrics of the Sovereign King, until the Report of the Commission appeared.

Let us examine, gentlemen, these two complaints. Up to the present, one missionary only has publicly replied to M. Cattier—I think he did so in the name of all those there—Monsignor Roelens, Bishop of Djerba, Apostolic Vicar of the Upper Congo, of the Order of the White Fathers of Africa. He published a letter, which you can find in the *Bien Public* of the 16th February last, and from which I will make the following extracts. The quotation, gentlemen, is somewhat lengthy, but it is a very interesting one, and as the question at issue is the civilisation of the Congo, I hope that the House will allow me to read it *in extenso*. Monsignor Roelens is, moreover, a most attractive personality; son of a gardener in Western Flanders, he has acquired special authority by his long sojourn in the Congo, by his extensive experience and

knowledge of the people and things of that country. He has sacrificed his health in the Congo, and has become an old man before his time. He deserves the respect and the admiration of all humanitarians: —

"Be good enough to glance," says Monsignor Roelens, "at the map of the Congo, and you will see that where exploitation is carried on excessively, in the districts visited by the Commission of Inquiry, there are no Catholic Missions. The agents have kept to their secret instructions, and have abstained from all violence in the proximity of the Catholic Missions. The Catholic missionaries have not been the ocular witnesses of grave abuses. Abuses of a minor importance, which they have seen, they have brought to the attention of the Government, and often the latter took note of their complaints. 'But,' it will be said, 'did not the missionaries know the grave abuses of which to-day the agents of the Congo State are accused?' If there were not here, in this country, newspapers, railways, commercial relations, would one know the crimes committed at Orleans, Bordeaux, or Marseilles? Even to-day, does one know in Brussels all the crimes committed in London? Now, in the Congo, there is no connection between the various districts. During my fourteen years' stay in the Congo, I have never known what took place outside my sphere, save through the European newspapers. The missionaries did not see committed around them grave abuses. A few rumours which they had heard from various sources seemed to them, in comparison with what they saw themselves, so untrue, that the vehement charges brought by the English against their Belgian compatriots caused them indignation. Those who protested said what they had seen, and what they were assured was the case. The Protestant missionaries have taken upon themselves to study the country rather than to convert its inhabitants. They have penetrated into all the regions where produce is being exploited. The interests of their cause led them to undertake therein veritable enquiries. The agents of the State did not dare to oppose this, because the *mot d'ordre* is, 'Give way to the Englishmen.'* If a Belgian missionary had wished to penetrate into these areas, he would have been quickly stopped. If he had allowed himself to make an enquiry into the acts of officials, he would have been expelled, and all the anti-Catholic Press would have shouted in chorus against clerical interference. The Catholic missionaries not having seen the abuses in question, it was impossible for them to verify their existence. Would M. Cattier have wished to see the missionaries distribute amongst the public, accusations of abuses which they had not witnessed, and which it was impossible for them to control? We should not be asked so much as that! We prefer to leave such a proceeding to the Commission of Inquiry, and to M. Cattier. The latter, moreover, forgets what he wrote in his preface. 'Whoever,' he said, 'had asserted a year ago a tenth part of the facts which to-day are definitely established, would have been prosecuted. He would have found himself in the position of being unable to prove his charges, and his judges would have condemned him.' M. Cattier would have been the first to condemn a missionary who would have been so bold as to do so, and he would have been right."†

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* The ludicrous inaccuracy of this statement may be estimated from the fact that both the English and the American Missions have been refused any extension of their sites by the Congo Government. Fifty-two Evangelical missionaries, representing all the Evangelical Missions in the Congo, and including representatives of Great Britain, Canada, United States, Sweden, Germany, Norway and Denmark, passed a collective protest on the 11th January of this year, in which the following paragraph appears: —

"We also emphatically protest against the repeated refusal to sell sites for mission stations to our Societies, contrary to the provisions of the general act of the Conference of Berlin."

† I have no wish to do otherwise than to touch very briefly upon the attitude of the Catholic missionaries on the Congo. Readers who are acquainted with the Congo question, and who have followed the question for the last ten years, must judge for themselves as to whether Monsignor Roelens' defence meets the case. I will content myself with saying that Monsignor Roelens' defence would have been stronger were it not for the unfortunate and incontestable fact that, while the entire body of Roman Catholic missionaries on the Congo have kept silent, whether because, as Monsignor Roelens says, they did not know what was going on, or because various circumstances prevented their speaking out, a certain number of Catholic missionaries, and some of considerable eminence, have gone out of their way to deny facts brought forward by the Protestant missionaries, and since confirmed so abundantly and completely by the Commission of Inquiry. If, as Monsignor Roelens says, the Catholic missionaries did not

I was led, gentlemen, to try and meet Monsignor Roelens, and to ask him if he had witnessed abuses in the Congo. Here is practically what he replied to me: —During a stay of fourteen years in the Congo, he witnessed one solitary abusive act. He was told that hunger was decimating the native carriers between Kassongo and Lake Tanganyika, and that they were dying on the road at the rate of ten per cent. He at once made an inquiry, and wrote a personal letter to the King-Sovereign, in order to gain time, advising the latter to arrange for the victualling of the carriers from Kassongo, from the Tanganyika side, by the Eastern route. He obtained satisfaction, and the abuse was suppressed. On the other hand, the Jesuit Fathers Cus and Vanhencxthoven, also Congo missionaries, not having succeeded in making themselves heard by the Commission of Inquiry, sent it, before the Report was drawn up, a detailed memorandum, in which they dealt, *inter alia*, with the question of native land tenure. Father Cus has published in the papers, and M. Vandervelde quoted from it the other day, a letter which he wrote to M. de Cuvelier* on the 9th July, 1905, also an account of a very suggestive conversation which he had in June, 1905, with M. Kervyn, a Director in the Congo State, concerning the claim of the administration to consider as vacant and to seize lands belonging, in point of fact, to the natives. From these documents, which, be it noted, are antecedent to the publication of the Report, it appears that the missionaries have defended with energy the rights and the interests of the natives, when they had reason to think that these rights

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themselves know that these abuses existed, why did they necessarily conclude that their Protestant colleagues, worshippers of the same God as themselves, were deliberately committing perjury? Surely the cause of truth and righteousness was not served by such an attitude? A case in point is the declaration of Monsignor Van Ronsle, Bishop of Thymbrium, Apostolic Vicar of the Congo State—in other words, the head of all the Belgian missionaries in the Congo. This declaration constitutes the first *annex* attached to the reply of the Congo Government to Mr. Casement's Report *(Notes sur le Rapport de M. Casement, Consul de sa Majesté Britannique)*. The declaration is a reply to a series of letters, published in the *West African Mail*, from the Rev. J. H. Weeks, and is an elaborate attempt to explain away the terrible data as to depopulation, cruelty, mis-government, and oppression which Mr. Weeks has enabled me, from time to time, to place before the world. But Mr. Weeks' charges have since been fully confirmed by the Report of the Congo Commission of Inquiry, and the Commissioners concluded that he had proved his case. I simply ask this question, and I put it especially to Catholic readers: "Why did Monsignor Van Ronsle, head of the Belgian Catholic missionaries in the Congo, seek to discredit Mr. Weeks in the eyes of public opinion, and make himself the echo in his declaration of the stereotyped arguments of King Leopold's Congo Secretaries?' Mr. Weeks is a missionary of standing and repute, of nearly a quarter of a century's experience on the Congo. He is an honest, upright, sterling man. I know him, and would go bail for his integrity. He has been proved right; Monsignor Van Ronsle has been proved wrong. Another noteworthy fact, in connection with this unhappy question, is the circumstance that while, to my knowledge, not a single Protestant missionary has attacked the Catholic missionaries in the Upper Congo for not speaking out, the Protestant missionaries have been most shamefully attacked for years by the Catholic organs in Belgium, and by Catholic organs in England and America and other countries, these attacks continuing until the appearance of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, a Catholic commission, which admitted, and under the circumstances generously admitted, the splendid part played by Protestant missionaries on the Congo, a part which M. Verhaegen disingenuously attempts to credit to their Catholic brethren. Judgment on this painful subject must be left to the verdict of history.

* Principal Secretary of State to the Congo Government.

and interests were threatened.† M. Cattier, who ignores these facts, who has not established contact with the missionaries, has, therefore, simply calumniated them, and I am sorry for him. As for the newspapers called "missionary newspapers," which M. Cattier accuses of having published nothing but panegyrics of the Sovereign-King, they have praised, and I hope they will continue to praise, all which deserves praise on the Congo. Not to recognise the grandeur of the royal work; to forget the primitive state of the Congo, such as it was described by Livingstone, when the caravan routes were strewn with negro skeletons;* to forget the long and costly anti-slavery crusade, the suppression of the slave trade, the retreat of cannibalism, the construction of the railway, the interdiction of alcohol, the establishment of cities which prosper, and steamship lines which develop themselves; to forget, especially, the opening of the black continent to missionaries, and to civilisation; not to recognise that this gigantic work deserves the praise and gratitude, not only of all men with a heart, but of every civilised man, and that it justifies what M. Cattier calls, improperly, the panegyrics of the missionaries; is to refuse to recognise facts, is to be ungrateful, is to be unjust (applause on the right). Moreover, gentlemen, M. Vandervelde quoted a week ago anything but panegyrics of the Sovereign-King, notably when he read to the House extracts from the *Mouvement des Missions Catholiques au Congo*. In respect to this review, and the extent to which it may be called a missionary review, a point which was brought up, if I am not mistaken, by M. A. Daens last Tuesday, I have informed myself,

† Father A. Vermeersch's courageous and remarkable volume, which has quite recently appeared, redounds to the honour of the author, and of the Belgian Catholic Priesthood. It shows, very clearly, that many Catholic missionaries on the Congo knew what was going on, and complained to the local authorities. This fact, which is to their credit, increases the peculiarity of the attitude of the Roman Priesthood in Europe and in America prior to the appearance of the Report of the King's Commission.

* As they are now, but on a much larger scale, and with this difference, that the bodies are generally thrown into the adjoining bush for the sake of appearances. On the Kasango-Kamambarre caravan route, passing through the great Manyema country, the stench arising from the dead bodies of carriers is so excessive and habitual that the Italian officers have, with grim humour, applied to it the special term, "Manyema perfume." Let the revelations in the Tilkens case be referred to (Belgian debate, 1903), for a similar picture of the Great Nile caravan road. In the old days the slaves who perished on the roads formed part of convoys, the remnants of which, upon arriving at destination, were regarded as assets by their owners, and treated as such. It was horrible, but not so horrible as the state of affairs to-day. For the Congo carrier of to-day has never finished; not for him is the comparatively joyous life of the plantation slave, or the still more easy life (by comparison) of the domestic servant, under the domestic slavery system of the Arab. Obtained by means abominably cruel, the slaves of the Arab ivory merchant formed, nevertheless, vast areas of cultivation; the Arabs were colonisers; witness the huge centres of population they brought into existence—ruthless colonisers, but still colonisers, for they were part of the land, and, had they merely destroyed, they would have been making of their own habitation a desert. Theirs was the wealth of agricultural produce, of great producing towns. Ivory is all they had in common, as an asset, with those who have succeeded them. But the wealth of their successors lies in obtaining, in the quickest possible time, in the main a single product—rubber. They are not attached to the soil. Their object is purely mercenary—and for objects far removed from Africa. *They* do not stand to get rich by Africa getting richer; on the contrary, the more they can squeeze out of Africa, the greater their profits. With them riches mean Africa's impoverishment. Hence they do not destroy, to construct under different forms, as did the Arab; they merely destroy. The naturally richest part of the Congo territories, to-day, where the native owns more, is the part where Arab influence still prevails; but this part, too, is rapidly sharing the fate of the remainder.

and I learn that the review is the work, not of missionaries, but of a committee interested in missions. The collaboration of the missionaries consists solely in the letters, which are generally signed, which they authorise the review to publish. The majority of the missionaries, moreover, have their own publications. Thus, the Jesuit Fathers publish the *Missions Belges de la Compagnie de Jesus* (Congo, Bengal, Ceylon). After having briefly recalled these facts, gentlemen, I do not hesitate (however weak may be the authority of my testimony) to address to the missionaries the profound homage of my admiration: "Continue in your civilising work, valiant pioneers of Christ. You do Belgium honour. Do not let discouragement invade your souls; congratulate yourselves, rather, for attacks which will have compelled your few opponents to study closely your work. Light is forthcoming, and to every impartial man it will not be the Catholic missionaries who will emerge from the inquiry upon the Congo, lessened in the eyes of the world. Such will be, exclusively, certain agents of the State, and of the Companies, guilty of abuses which are no longer denied, and which the Minister himself has called 'grave and regrettable,' and which the Commission has pointed out with a firmness and moderation, and independence of character, for which we ought to be very grateful."

It is to-day made clear that if the civilisation of the Congo natives does not progress; if in many places it seems compromised for a long time; if the Protestant missionaries easily find causes for complaints, which permit them to decry the Government of the Congo State, and enable them to boast of the superior humanity and generosity of England; if, in certain regions, the population is going down, instead of increasing; if morality around the official stations is worse than before the arrival of the white man; the present administration of the Congo State has serious things to answer for. I shall be told, perhaps, that I exaggerate. I should look upon exaggeration as a crime. Profound admirer of the civilising thought which inspired the King, admiring his energy and his perseverance, I would say more, admiring his genius—I gave public testimony to my sympathies in the Congo work by signing, a few years ago, the Bill proposed by the Hon. M. Beernaert, relating to the immediate annexation of the Congo by Belgium. But I am compelled, as all honest men must be compelled, to bow before the evidence of facts:—

"The Congo State," thus it is the Report expresses itself in conclusion, "owes it to itself to introduce as soon as possible the reforms which we have suggested. . . . Notably the interpretation of a large and liberal application of the land laws, the effective application of the law limiting the labour tax to forty hours per month, the suppression of the sentry system, the suppression of the permits for the *capitas* to carry arms, the withdrawal of the right of coercion conferred upon the commercial companies, supervision over military expeditions, and the freedom of the Judiciary from administrative tutelage."

It is not I, gentlemen, who have traced this programme, which constitutes the counterpart of a formidable act of accusation. It is sufficient, moreover, to remember the extracts of the Report read to the House last week by M. Vandervelde, in order to be convinced that the Sovereign of the Congo State is, perhaps, not served at this moment as he ought to be. It is not the laws which

he has passed which are subject to criticism (they form a remarkable legislative whole); it is their application which has become bad, tyrannical, anti-Christian.

"If the legislation had been applied in the spirit in which it was drafted," said, last week, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, "this application would have resulted in preventing the abuses pointed out by the Commission of Inquiry."*

Such is also my opinion. I shall not return, gentlemen, to the grave facts brought out in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, and which the House knows. I wish to touch on one matter, which has not been pointed out by the Commission of Inquiry, but which has led to many energetic representations on the part of the missionaries.

The State, having undertaken the free transport from one station to another of the legitimate wives of the soldiers and workmen whom it desires to shift from place to place, found, after a time, that the expense was too heavy. The State drew up, therefore, alongside the civil marriage recognised by the Code, free unions which are foreign to the Code. It is a species of officially-recognised concubinage, but of a temporary duration, and forced, so to speak, upon the soldiers and workmen when they arrive at a station. When they are removing they are not allowed to take away with them the female companions with whom they have lived for a few months. Such a *régime* is the direct negative of the civilising views of the Sovereign-King. It can only contribute to decreasing the respect in which regular marriages are held, and in lessening their number even among the natives who are most closely amenable to State influences—soldiers and workmen. It tends, moreover, to compromise gravely the work of civilisation, for a paltry matter of money.†

Gentlemen, when one has gone to the root of things, one acquires the conviction that the Congo State is not served at this moment by a sufficiency of competent men, men with high and humanitarian views, with civilising tendencies, such as were the servants of the State when the King founded it.‡ I am well aware that neither Belgium nor the other signatory Powers of the Act of Berlin has the right to interfere in the internal administration of the Congo State, and I do not dream of inviting the Government to do so, but I am entitled to note what the Minister

* The abuses are the necessary and inevitable result of the fundamental claims of the Congo State to the land and the products of the soil embodied in its legislation. The laws subsequently passed to correct the abuses inherent to that legislation are laws for European consumption. The Congo State appears in the light of a man, who, having lit a great conflagration, and seeing the havoc which that conflagration is causing, but desiring for his own purpose that the conflagration itself shall be maintained, sits at a table, at a convenient distance from the flames, and drafts a number of pious regulations, in which he seeks to remedy the extent of its depredations.

† More usefully spent, no doubt, in the "civilising views of the Sovereign-King," in subsidising newspapers and public men, paying commissions on rubber to officials, and purchasing material of war.

‡ That is true, but why? Because the policy of the State, from its foundation to 1890, was professedly humanitarian, and King Leopold surrounded himself at that time with men of high calibre, belonging to various countries. But from 1890 onwards, the King's policy was seen with increasing clearness to be a policy of mere pillage, and such a policy could only be carried out by men of an inferior type.

for Foreign Affairs said himself (and in the same terms as he used), that "the Congo, watered with our blood, must remain a Belgian work." But I might be allowed to add, "must remain a work worthy of Belgians." I am also entitled, basing myself upon the close solidarity which exists, in practice, between Belgium and the Congo, to express publicly the wish that a more generous, a higher and more Christian, a more worthy inspiration of Belgium and its King, and, to sum up, a more humane inspiration, should henceforth be applied to the Congo administration. It has been sought to reply to the reproaches addressed to the Congo State, by pointing out that other Powers, and, in particular, France and England, treat the natives of their Colonies even worse. This, gentlemen, is a detestable argument. Even if this were so, the Congo State owes it to itself, if it wishes to maintain the sympathies of Belgians, and that is a very important matter for it, not to imitate the bad examples of others, and to act paternally towards beings who, if they are black and barbarians, are none the less men like us, and our brethren. I fear much (I see it with sorrow) that Belgian public opinion, which has become so favourable to the great work of the King, will end by turning away from it, if the Congo State does not make up its mind to treat the natives as they are treated with so much success by the missionaries, and if it does not seek to raise them morally as well as materially. Finally, this is what I ask, and this is the measure in which I associate myself with the proposals of M. Vandervelde. I note that the Minister for Foreign Affairs sent the Report of the Congo Commission of Inquiry to all the Signatory Powers of the Berlin Act, thus placing under the eyes of numerous Governments the grave charges against Belgian citizens, who have the right to its protection. Their position as Christian missionaries assures special protection to them, by virtue of Article 6 of the Act of Berlin. If it be true that the Minister, or his Department, has forwarded this document, he will kindly say so. But, in that case, he will no doubt take in hand—unless he has done so already, which I should learn with great satisfaction—"the essential interests" of Belgian subjects—to quote once again the expression of the Duke of Wellington; and he will, perhaps, be good enough to ask the Congo State to dissipate the bad impression which may have been produced upon these Powers through the unjust criticisms formulated against the missionaries by the Commission of Inquiry. That is a duty which appears to me to be demanded by a care for our national honour, and I invite the attention of the House to it. Do we not see, when the essential interests of an Englishman are jeopardised by any Power, that England immediately takes his part, and exacts reparation? Do not all States act in the same way? Why should not Belgium also fulfil this duty? The honour of the missionaries, their professional honour, has been gravely affected by the Report of the Commission, a Report demanded by the Congo State, published by it, and despatched to the Powers. I do not formally propose any method whereby satisfaction may be granted. I suggest, however, the following method, which to some extent explains itself. M. Vandervelde asked the House that all the evidence, and all the documents, collected by the Commission of Inquiry, should be published, and placed in the hands of members.

For my part, I look upon this publication as useless, in regard to the accusations of the Report, which no one disputes—that is to say, its conclusions relating to the Congo State itself. But the case is not the same in regard to the conclusions relating to the missionaries, and I should see with much satisfaction the Minister asking the Congo State to publish the documents and evidence produced on the subject of Catholic missionaries and missions. I think I can guarantee to him that this measure will not be opposed by the interested parties, and that it would not be necessary, in such a publication, to suppress any names! The missionaries demand proudly that full and complete light shall be thrown upon their actions and their work. These documents, and this evidence, accompanied by the reply which the missionaries might be asked to make to them, should then be transmitted to the Powers as a sequel to the Report, in order to allow them to judge of the worth of the complaints made against the missionaries. I repeat, I do not make this a formal proposal. I throw out the suggestion, and I should feel satisfied with any other means which the Minister might adopt, to obtain from the Congo State the reparation due to Belgian citizens, unjustly accused through that State. If the Minister is unable to grant me satisfaction, or rather to grant the missionaries satisfaction, I should probably be compelled to put forward a resolution, and to beg the House to vote it, and to take in hand itself the interests of Belgian citizens, who uphold the flag of our national honour on the Congo. I associate myself with the demand of M. Vandervelde to see the House placed in a position to discuss before long the Bill of the 7th August, 1901, on the government of the future Colonial possessions of Belgium. I associate myself with this demand on the grounds mentioned by M. Vandervelde. I cannot at present, however, endorse his proposal to see "the House name a Commission, instructed to make an inquiry on the financial consequences which might result for Belgium through the ultimate annexation of the Congo." Such an inquiry appears to me premature. It would, no doubt, be necessary when the question of taking over the Congo is re-opened, and we should then have to study the financial situation of the Colony.

M. Lorand:—If this eventuality were produced by the death of the King, you would not have the time to proceed.

M. Verhaegen:—But we should take the time, my dear colleague.

M. Lorand:—How? Where will you find a stipulation analogous to that of the civil code, which would assure us even three months to make an inventory, and forty days to deliberate on it?

M. Vandervelde:—This Commission of Inquiry would have, obviously, to go to the Congo. How is it possible that it should do so in the event which I pointed out, and which M. Lorand has recalled?

M. Verhaegen:—I cannot examine at this moment what duties would have to be fulfilled by this Commission, but I confine myself to quoting a part of your proposal, and placing myself from the

one point of view of the financial consequences which might result for us from the annexation of the Congo. When the question crops up, we shall have the time to examine it, and we will take the time.

M. Allard:—No, no.

M. Lorand:—We should certainly not have the time. We should be told that the sovereignty of the Congo cannot remain uncertain, or provisional, and that it has to be taken or left.

M. Verhaegen:—Make your mind, easy, my dear colleague; you will find no one in this part of the House to do what is vulgarly called in Flanders, "buy a cat in a bag." What I ask the Government finally is to invite, in a friendly way, the Congo State to communicate to the signatory Powers of the Act of Berlin, the resolutions which will shortly be taken, if I am well informed, by the Commission instructed to point out the reforms to be accomplished in the Congo. I hope, also, that the members of the House will receive the text of these resolutions. I express this hope because I do not share the suspicions of M. Vandervelde towards the Commission for Reforms. I am convinced that these resolutions will be characterised by generosity, by a real Belgian spirit, and by a strong reforming zeal. I hope that the Congo State will profit by the salutary humiliation which has been inflicted upon its administration by the Commission of Inquiry, and will deem its own honour involved in putting a stop to all the abuses which have been pointed out. If, officially, we are not called upon to trouble ourselves about, nor to answer for the treatment inflicted upon the natives of the Congo, our honour, and the good name of Belgium, is interested in a country governed by our King, and administered to a great extent by Belgians, and that it must be worthy of the esteem and the confidence of civilised humanity (applause on various benches).

The Speaker:—M. Bertrand is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Bertrand.

M. Bertrand:—Gentlemen, the Congo State can, obviously, be looked upon from a dual point of view; the moral point of view, and the economic and financial point of view. My hon. friend, M. Vandervelde, was principally concerned, in his speech of last Tuesday, with the moral side of this enterprise. I should like to insist, briefly, on the financial question. But, before doing so, I wish to refer in a few words to the attitude of the Belgian Minister in this matter, and then to the system which, in my opinion, would be most favourable to apply in the Congo. Last Tuesday, after the speech made in such moderate terms by my friend Vandervelde, we heard a discourse which had been prepared in advance, and which was read to us by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This discourse was in bad form, and exaggerated. What did the Minister for Foreign Affairs tell us, and what have the other Ministers of the King told us before? That my friends, Vandervelde, Lorand, and the others were to be looked upon with suspicion? Why? Because we are Republicans, and have fought the Congo enterprise from the beginning. This is absolutely false. My friends and myself have only been moved by

feelings of pity for the natives. But what is the use of insisting upon this? M. de Favereau, in defending, by order, the Congo system, was embarrassed, and he brought forward no serious arguments to defend it, but confined himself to insinuating things against my friend Vandervelde. But I do not think he succeeded. I admit that for ten years the present Ministers have pretty well succeeded in influencing public opinion in their favour, as regards the Congo enterprise. They declared that the Socialists were fighting this enterprise because they were Republicans, and enemies of the King. They declared that we were acting for Liverpool merchants; that we wished to help foreigners against a Belgian work. But, gentlemen, everything has its limits, and to-day the Congo system, whose praises the Belgian Ministry have not ceased to sing, is condemned not only by us Socialists and Liberals, but by the Catholic Press, by Catholic missionaries, and, in the speech to which you have just listened, M. Verhaegen criticised this enterprise, and demanded, as we demand, that serious reforms should be introduced into the present organisation of the Congo State. Listen to what some clerical organs say. This is what *Le Patriote** said only a few days ago: —

"What made M. Vandervelde's interpellation necessary? The system of brigandage installed in the Congo by the Congo State, a system denounced for twelve years by *Le Patriote*, a system of which the infamies have been pointed out by the Commission of Inquiry named by the King. Italy has refused to accept any longer her part of the responsibility, through her officers in those regions. It has been said, both for the honour of the Italian nation and for the respect which the Italian army owes to itself, not even an officer on leave will be authorised, in future, to take service in the Congo. England, backed by Germany,† compelled the Sovereign of the Congo State to bring about an inquiry, and the Commission appointed by the Sovereign-King has adopted nearly all the charges of the English missionaries whom the Congo State instructed its Press to denounce, as abominable calumniators, as pioneers of a campaign of defamation, in order to ensure the annexation of the Congo by England. These facts dominate the controversy; they destroy all the tactics of M. de Favereau during the last ten years."

Why, we have never been so violent as that! *Le Bien Public*, which had never attacked the Congo, which had, on the contrary, defended it, published the following words in November last, after the publication of the Report of the Commission named by the Government: —

"When it is a matter of charges brought against the State, the Commission is much more reserved. It does not receive them without examining them, without pleading extenuating circumstances, without attempting to weaken the value of the weight of evidence, and this is precisely what gives to the conclusions of its report, as regards the administration of the country, an exceptional gravity. The abuses which exist in the State are such that, notwithstanding its appearance of special pleading, the Report constitutes the most crushing indictment which has been formulated hitherto against the agents of the State. It is outrageous that, after this, an attempt should be made to invert the parts, and to place on the bench of the accused, not the State, but the missionaries, whom no one has attacked until to-day. We shall defend the missionaries, human dignity, and the natural rights of the natives, and of religious truth. Now, the system actually prevailing in the Congo—we do not speak of the laws and decrees, but of the way in which these laws and decrees are applied—the actual system on the Congo is the primary obstacle to the uplifting of the native."

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* *Le Patriote* is not a religious organ, but an organ of the Party in the State known by the somewhat misleading epithet of "Clerical Party." It has, I am told, the largest circulation of any paper in Belgium.

† This is inaccurate.

On their part, the Catholic missionaries, and the publications which represent the Catholic missions, have been equally emphatic, far more violent, certainly, than was M. Vandervelde a week ago in this House, and this, gentlemen, is what is called a "campaign of calumny," which for years we have been accused of carrying on. To-day the so-called calumniators are legion.

Now, a word as to the system of exploitation prevailing in the Congo. The history of colonial policy on the Congo is divided into three parts: the first period, from 1885 to 1891, may be called the Liberal period; the second period, from 1891 to 1901, can be called the Fiscal period; and after that we find the Monopolist period. The capitalistic world prefers, before all, the Liberal system, that of commercial liberty. This system can be defined as follows: the country pays all the cost of the enterprise, and financial and commercial Companies reap millions. All sacrifices are to be made by the metropolis for the benefit of a few dozen people, who rapidly get wealthy, to the detriment of their fellow-countrymen, and to the detriment of the natives, whom they often odiously exploit.* We, gentlemen, are the adversaries of this system. The second system consists in making the State owner of a portion of its domain, which it exploits for its profit, leaving the remainder to private people. This is what took place in the Congo from 1891 to 1901. Finally, gentlemen, the Congo has been exploited in later years after the system which is called the "collectivist system." The collectivism which we preach, we Socialists, is a collectivism working to benefit the nation—that is to say, all the citizens who compose it. That which is in operation in the Congo is for the profit of one man, the Sovereign-King. It reposes upon the exploitation of the natives, and the Belgian taxpayer. In practice it is carried out as follows. The greater portion of the territory belongs to the Congo State, and to the Sovereign personally, both being one. It is a collective property, which has been formed by the brutal expropriation of the collective property of the natives, which was in existence for centuries. Another part of the territory has been handed over to Concessionaire Companies, who exploit it in the name of the Congo State, and who divide the profits with the latter, even to the extent of one-half. Finally, a very small part of the territory is left free to Companies, or to native owners. I cannot criticise, personally, colonial exploitation for the profit of the State. It ought to mean the development of the country for the benefit of the natives, and with their help the State, as exploiter, might, in my opinion, be much more humane than the Companies. However, the Congo State, as the Commission of Inquiry points out, has exploited the natives, in a literal sense, for purposes of gain. It has employed the most odious means, and the money thus acquired, instead of serving the Colony, has been squandered in Belgium. The principle of State exploitation is not criticisable, but the means

* It would be difficult to crowd a greater number of inaccuracies into a single sentence. The weakness of many Socialist critics lies precisely here, that they have not studied and do not comprehend either the problems, the necessities, duties, or responsibilities of colonial action in tropical dependencies.

employed have been obviously disgraceful.* It is a singular thing, gentlemen, that the most emphatic adversaries of the system of the monopoly system in Belgium, our Ministers at the head of them, declare themselves, so far as the Congo is concerned, the deovted upholders of a system of State exploitation. In Belgium, free monopolies have been granted to private companies. It is thus that private companies have been granted the monopoly of the National Bank, certain railways, the monopoly of coal mines, tramways, etc., whereas in the Congo the contrary system is defended. There we find a large domain, exploited by the State, is justified; and it is considered excellent that the administration of the Congo State should pocket half the profits realised by the Concessionnaire Companies. How can this contradiction be explained? It can only be explained by concluding that the Belgian Ministers are more devoted to the King than to the Belgian State; that they understand perfectly well what is profitable to the King; but that they do not wish anything of the kind for Belgium, whose interests they compromise to benefit the capitalist classes. I bring my remarks on this point to a conclusion by putting the following question: Why do you refuse, you Belgian Ministers, to apply in Belgium the *régime* of State ownership which you defend in the Congo for the benefit of the Sovereign-King? Why do you refuse to apply the system, which concedes certain enterprises to private Companies, with State participation in the profits? In a few days you will have the opportunity, when we discuss the system to be adopted for working the Campine Mines, to show us why you do not recognise in Belgium a system which you find good on the Congo.

Gentlemen, I will now deal with the chief point I wish to touch upon, namely, the financial consequences which may accrue to Belgium through the system at present existing in the Congo State. At the beginning, in 1885, when for the first time the question of giving to the King of the Belgians the title of Sovereign of the Congo State was discussed in the House and the country, very solemn promises were made to us. The Congo, it was then said, would never cost Belgium anything, and would be very profitable to Belgium. A few years later, in 1890, the question of a direct pecuniary intervention of the Belgian Treasury, on behalf of the Congo State, was mooted. Belgium advanced the Congo State 25 million francs, without interest, a sum which was to be paid at the rate of five millions in 1890, then two millions per annum for ten years. In 1896 a new loan of 6½ millions was granted by Belgium to the Congo State. In 1891, on the strength of the Convention concluded between the Congo State and Belgium, when the loan of 25 millions in 1890 was contracted, we were in the position of being able to take over the Congo or wait, and it was stipulated in the Convention, drafted by M. Beernaert, that in case the Congo was not taken over in 1891, Belgium could exact interest on the capital advanced by her, which would have amounted to 1,000,000 francs per annum. I had the honour of interpellating

* In what sense can the Congo enterprise be called a "State," when the citizens of that State, *e.g.*, the natives of the country, have not only no voice in the management of its affairs, but have been robbed of everything which constitutes citizenship even in primitive communities?

the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 28th February, 1905, exactly a year ago, on the responsibilities which might accrue to Belgium through the financial situation of the Congo. In the course of that interpellation, I dwelt especially on the danger in which Belgium was involved, in respect to the Congo State, from the financial point of view. It is not open to question that the Congo State is becoming very seriously indebted. Since it became free to borrow without control, and without authority from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it has undertaken several loans for several millions. These millions have not been spent in the Congo, to develop the country, and to improve the lot of the natives; but they have been spent in Belgium, and have been utilised in executing sumptuous works, and in buying real estate. That was the theme of my speech a year ago. What did the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is also the Prime Minister, reply to me on that occasion? He accused me, as usual, of exaggerating to make my own case good, or of having been mistaken, or of trifling with figures. Now, all that I affirmed a year ago is verified to-day by the data contained in M. Cattier's book. This is how M. Cattier criticises the action of the Congo State: —

"To escape all control," he says, "that is the desire of the financial department of the Congo State. The details which are furnished help to dissimulate truth, rather than make it appear."

That is precisely the position. In the *Bulletins Officiel* of the Congo State, the Congo State's Budget is published, but hitherto **the Congo State has never published a single account.** Now, what does this Budget contain? Nothing but mere estimates. One cannot arrive at an estimate of the real condition of the finances of a State until its accounts have been published, because only when that is done can one ascertain if the estimates of receipts and expenditure have been realised or not, and to what extent.* Now, although the Congo State has published a Budget every year for the last fifteen years, up to now not a single official publication has ever been made of the accounts of the State, and it is indispensable that this should be done. The financial history of the State falls into three distinct periods. The first is the period which M. Cattier calls the period of prudence, as from 1885 to 1890; the second is the period of tutelage, as a consequence of the Convention drafted by the House in 1890; the third is the period of wastefulness. During the first period, the main idea was not to create an onerous situation for Belgium, in case of annexation. Thus, the loan of 1888, on the lottery system, was organised in such a way as not to cost the Treasury of the Congo State anything, for the guaranteed fund is sufficient to insure interest on the sinking fund. The second period opened with the Convention of the 3rd July, 1890. At this time the Congo State undertook to furnish Belgium with all necessary information, and not to contract any loan without the consent of the Belgian Government. This Convention held good until 1891. What took place then? Hardly was the Convention signed, hardly had the pledges been undertaken, than the Congo State violated them by contracting a loan in

* In Father Vermeersch's book will be found tables, showing that in the last *two* years, the net revenues of the State (including the *Domaine de la Couronne)* have produced, out of rubber and ivory alone, £1,000,000 sterling in excess of the estimates.—*Vide* Congo Reform Association's May organ.

secret with M. de Browne de Tiège, and it was only in 1896 that the House and the country were informed of this infringement of the State's undertakings. One fine day the Congo State, wanting money to reimburse M. de Browne de Tiège, came to Belgium, and obtained, by a law voted by the majority of this House, a credit of 5,000,000 francs, to reimburse M. de Browne de Tiège, and another credit of a million and a half to make good certain deficits in the Budget of the current year. Once more, then, it was Belgium that paid! We now arrive at the third period. The latter is characterised, first of all, by a loan of 50 millions at four per cent., made by virtue of a Decree of the Sovereign-King, dated 15th October, 1901. This loan was contracted, I must add, after the Congo State found itself freed from the control of Belgium, and able to borrow without the authority of the Belgian Government. Two years and a half later, in February, 1904, a new Decree of the Sovereign-King was issued, authorising the Congo State to contract a new loan of 30 millions, at three per cent., that is to say, in less than two years and a half from the time the Congo State obtained its financial liberty, from the time that it was no longer subjected to the control of this House, from the time that it had no longer to obtain the authorisation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to contract loans; in two years and a half this State borrows a sum of 80 millions! But this is not all! In 1901 the same State incurred an indirect debt of 25 millions. At that time there was constituted in Belgium the Great Lakes Railway, thanks to a concession granted by the Congo State to M. Empain* and others. The capital was 25 millions. The Congo State guaranteed, during a great number of years, a minimum of interest to this Company at four per cent. I may mention, in parenthesis, that two members of this House, on the benches of the Right, are administrators of this Company. We must, therefore, add this indirect debt of 25 millions to the 80 millions borrowed on the strength of the decrees of the King-Sovereign. I may mention, in passing, that Belgium guaranteed to this 1904 loan, a minimum interest of four per cent., whereas Belgium borrows herself at three per cent.‡ Moreover, the loan of three per cent., concluded in 1904, was taken by a syndicate of Belgian bankers at the price of 72 francs per 100 francs share.† The consequence of this is that Belgium will have to reimburse 100 francs per share, when, in point of fact, the Congo State will have received for these shares only 72 francs per share. It would seem from this, either that the bankers have very little confidence in the Congo State, or that they determined to make the best of a given situation for their own benefit.

Gentlemen, I was saying a moment ago that the Congo State published each year in its *Bulletin Officiel*, the Budget for the following year, but that it has never published its annual accounts.

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* A banker, on terms of intimacy with the King.

‡ This is either a stenographic error, or the speaker meants that, in case of annexation, Belgium will have to pay four per cent. on this money, it being obvious, of course, that it was not Belgium, but the Congo State, which guaranteed the interest.

† This is not quite correct. It appears that a portion of the three per cent. loan was taken up at par, but that another portion was taken up, as the speaker says, at 28 per cent. discount.

It is, therefore, very difficult to know exactly, from a financial point of view, what is the true situation of the Congo State, to know precisely the actual figure of this debt. The number of shares issued on the loans contracted cannot be obtained without elaborate calculation. By taking into account the figures inscribed in the Budget of the State, for the annual interest on the current loans, my friend Vandervelde, a week ago, basing himself upon data in M. Cattier's book, declared that the debt of the Congo State amounted to 103 millions. M. de Favereau said that this figure was false. Asked to state what the real figure was, he was compelled to state that he did not know it! Now it seems to me, gentlemen, that when one man states that a figure quoted by another man is false, he should know the exact figure. M. de Favereau did not know it. How then can we explain the attitude of the Minister for Foreign Affairs? My friend Vandervelde, who is sitting by me, has just told me that the Minister merely repeated what he had been told to do. Such a rôle is a very pitiful one for a Belgian Minister (laughter on the benches of the extreme left).

M. Lorand:—It was obvious that he was repeating.

M. Bertrand:—Let us examine, then, the financial condition of the Congo State, according to the figures published by itself in the last fifteen years. From 1891 to 1905, a period of fifteen years, the total revenue is given at 250 millions. The same official document declares that the ordinary expenditure in that period amounted to 252 millions, or a deficit of two millions only, to which is added a deficit of 25 millions for extraordinary expenditure within this period. But, gentlemen, amongst the ordinary receipts of the Congo State since 1891, I have not seen included the five millions paid on the strength of the Convention of 1901, although the two millions annually paid for the ten following years do figure in the revenue returns. Similarly, the sum of 6½ millions paid by Belgium in 1896 to the Congo State does not figure in any of the revenue returns of that State. If we add the ordinary and extraordinary deficits together, we find an alleged deficit of 27 millions within this period. But from this must be deducted, it seems to me, first, the 5 millions in 1896, and then the 6½ millions paid by Belgium in 1896, which are not included in the revenues. Finally, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in his speech of Tuesday last, declared that of the loan on the lottery system of 1888, of 150 million francs, the Congo State had only cashed from 7 to 8 millions. We must, therefore, add these 8 millions on the one hand to the 5 millions in 1890, and to the 6½ millions in 1896, which makes a total of 19½ millions, which reduces the real deficit to less than 8 millions. But from 1890 to 1900, the Congo State, authorised by the Belgian Chancellor of the Exchequer, contracted other loans. There is a loan of 1½ millions in 1896, then another of 12½ millions in 1898, which makes 14 millions, to cover a deficit of 8 millions. The financial situation, so far as we can judge of it by the Budgets published by the Congo State, may be considered as excellent, and this notwithstanding that since 1901 the Congo State, being free, has contracted two loans, the first a loan of 50 millions, and another loan of 30 millions,

making altogether a total of 80 millions. Gentlemen, when I interpellated, in February, 1905, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, replying to the figures I have just quoted, declared that of the 80 millions which the Congo State had been authorised to borrow, the Congo State had only received 41 millions. M. Cattier, on the other hand, asserts that the real debt is one of 80 millions. A year ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer merely asserted the above, without giving any proof, or without giving any details in support of his statement. M. Cattier, on the other hand, in order to arrive at the figure of 80 millions, which he gives in his book, calculates the amount of this debt according to the yearly figures given in the Budgets. Now, gentlemen, the following are the figures taken from official documents of the State:—From 1893 to 1896, an annuity of 30,000 francs was set aside for the public debt:—

In 1897	...	70,000	francs.
„ 1899	...	495,000	„
„ 1901	...	620,000	„
„ 1902	...	1,872,000	„
„ 1904	...	2,156,000	„
„ 1905	...	2,922,000	„

Therefore, in a few years the annual charge on the Congo State's debt has risen from 30,000 to 2,922,000 francs. Some of the loans contracted by the Congo State bring in three per cent., others four per cent. The annuity of 2,922,000 represents, therefore, a debt of 80 million francs, in round figures, and not 41 millions, according to the sum quoted here a year ago by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I have checked the figures of M. Cattier from the *Bulletins Officiel* of the Congo State, and I must say that the figure fixing the debt at 80 millions is based upon very solid groundwork, whereas the figure furnished a year ago by the Chancellor of the Exchequer reposes upon nothing. Gentlemen, it is advisable that we should know the truth on the subject, in view of the situation in which Belgium will find herself if she takes over the Congo. For a long time the Congo State has owed us 31,000,000 francs, advanced without interest. Any day we may be called upon to take over the Congo, yet we are ignorant of the amount of its debt. Is not this astonishing? This debt amounts, without counting the 31 millions lent by Belgium, to 41 millions, according to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; to 80 millions, according to M. Cattier.

One thing is certain—these millions have not been used to develop the Colony, and improve the lot of the natives. Quite the contrary. Rapidly borrowed, they have served in a great part for sumptuous unproductive expenses. They have been utilised for the construction of the monumental arcade, which may be very fine, but which ought not to be paid for indirectly by Belgium, which will ultimately be the case. They have also been utilised in work undertaken on the Laeken Palace, which may cost 30 millions, according to the figure given here by M. Liebaert, notwithstanding that this Palace is not lived in at all for three parts of the year. They have been utilised in erecting a very costly Colonial Palace at Tervueren; they have been employed in constructing public

works, and buying real estate at Ostend, Brussels, in the South of France, and elsewhere. They have also been utilised in the construction of the Japanese Tower, which you may have seen at Laeken, and in the construction of a Chinese restaurant. Is it not idiotic to devote to such uses these millions, borrowed by the Congo State, which we ourselves will have to pay back, possibly before very long?* You should know also, gentlemen, that the contracts for these Public Works are given out without any tenders being invited, at fabulous prices, which are often paid in part with Congo bonds.

Gentlemen, this is the truth on the Congolese finances. A year ago, M. de Smet de Naeyer said that the debt of the Congo State amounted to 41 millions. Since then it has increased very rapidly, and it can without exaggeration be said to amount to-day to 80 millions, to which must be added the 31 millions representing the money advanced by Belgium without any interest. The Convention of 1890 placed a weapon in the hands of the Belgian Government. It was framed by M. Beernaert, and contained precious guarantees for our country. In 1901, Belgium might take over the Congo, or make a new Convention, maintaining the principle of Belgian Government control, and giving us all the necessary guarantees, from the point of view of future loans, which the Congo State might make. Instead of that, what did the Government do? It allowed the date on which we might have taken over the Congo, or have established a new Convention, to lapse. From that time onwards the King-Sovereign became entirely free, and borrowed millions upon millions, which have been used in the manner which I have recently indicated. But there is more than this even; the Congo State had undertaken in 1890, in case Belgium did not annex in 1901, to pay interest at three per cent. on the sums advanced to it by Belgium. This interest would have amounted to nearly 1,200,000 francs. It has, however, not been paid; a present has been made of it to the Sovereign of the Congo State, who squanders so many millions. Now, when we in this House ask, for instance, that subsidies shall be paid to those *Communes* which distribute food to the children in the Schools, the Government replies that it has no money. Yet this sum of 1,200,000 francs would enable 100,000 poor children to be fed during the winter months. When we ask for increases of salary or wages for the smaller clerks in the Government offices, the reply is the same—the Government has no money. And yet, in the face of this, we make a present of 1,200,000 francs to the Congo State, when this sum might be usefully employed in increasing by 100 francs per annum the salaries of 12,000 clerks, on the railways, or any other work. And, gentlemen, if the system operating in the Congo is dangerous for our finances, it is more dangerous still for Belgium, for it reflects upon our policy as a whole. Under the *censitaire régime*, and this is practised in all countries, even in Germany, for example, at the end of every year a solemn opening of Parliament took place, with a speech from the throne; the

* Is it not infamous that civilisation should stand aside with folded arms while King Leopold is enslaving, murdering, and torturing the natives of the Congo, in order to obtain the wherewithal to curry popularity in Belgium, by giving orders to contractors to build Chinese restaurants?

Government thought itself compelled to inform the country and Parliament of the work it hoped to accomplish in the course of the session, and the programme which it reckoned upon submitting to the deliberations of Parliament. For the last twelve years there has been nothing of all this with us. The House meets without drum or fife, like a mere village council. We do not know what laws we are going to discuss. From time to time the Government brings in a Bill, which is sent to a Commission, and a few days afterwards the Bill is voted. There is absolutely no control. The Budgets are drafted in such a way that Ministers can shift millions from one item to another. They are introduced at the last moment; it is never possible to discuss them, and very often personal friends of the Ministers are entrusted to draw up the reports. How is it possible that, under such conditions, Parliamentary control can be exercised effectually? In truth, the *régime* existing in the Congo has its counter effect on Belgian policy. When we interpellate a Minister, he barely listens to us, and when he deigns to answer, he replies on a side issue. Formerly, in the Budgetary discussions, the Ministers treated the House with loyalty, and thought themselves bound to reply point by point to the questions brought forward. To-day they reply in a few minutes, or in a very inadequate fashion, to the representatives of the nation. The Congo system, applied by the King to his Belgian Ministers, unhinges our Parliamentary *régime*, and it is high time that we should take care lest this *régime* falls completely into disuse, and personal power triumphs (applause on the extreme left).

Let us now see the result which this system has produced, to the detriment of Belgian finances. You know, gentlemen, that Belgium is a shareholder in the Congo Railway to an amount of fifteen millions. At a given moment the administration of the Congo Railway was compelled to lower its rates. This decrease in freight charges was favourable to the Congo State, and to the King, for the conveyance of the products of the *Domaine Privé*. The consequence of the new tariff has been a decrease in the profits, and it is Belgium which has felt the loss principally, as shareholder. The Belgian Treasury is losing at least 200,000 to 300,000 francs. Another characteristic fact. It came out the other day that the Ministry had authorised the construction, without the knowledge of the House, at the Chateau of Laeken, of a railway tunnel, which is going to cost 3,000,000 francs.* I have even been told that a year or two ago the King ordered, without consulting his Railway Minister, a new railway train, from the Compagnie des Wagons-Lits, which order was executed in the works of this Company at Vincennes. The Belgian Treasury had ultimately to pay (outcry on the extreme left). This train, it seems, cost from 500,000 to 600,000 francs (renewed outcry on the extreme left).

M. Allard:—Is that true?

A Member on the Extreme Left:—They will not answer.

M. Bertrand:—And what have we seen, gentlemen, in connection with this Palace of the King, which is being constructed at

* An underground tunnel, connecting the Palace with the railway. It might be called, perhaps, the tunnel of discretion!

the present moment? This important work was put up for tender, but the lowest tender was set aside, and the contract was given to another, 200,000 francs above the lowest! This other contractor is a clerical deputy of Brussels, and a personal friend of the King, it is said—M. Fichefet.

M. TERWAGNE:—Friends should not be treated like dogs!

M. BERTRAND:—Finally, gentlemen, I think it is high time, for the good name of the country, to protest against the existing *régime;* and, to return once more to the object of my interpellation, I endorse, so far as I am concerned, the conclusions of my friend Vandervelde. For years the adversaries of the system which we criticise have preached in the desert. To-day, all just and generous minds are convinced that system must be brought to a stop, because that which is at issue in this debate is not a political question, not a vain party question; it is, in truth, a question of justice and humanity (applause on the extreme left).

M. Beernaert's Resolution.

M. BEERNAERT:—Gentlemen, to conclude this debate, I have the honour to propose to the House the following Resolution:—

"The House, imbued with the ideas which presided over the foundation of the Congo State, and inspired the Act of Berlin, renders homage to all those who have devoted themselves to this civilising work;

"And, seeing the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry instituted by the Congo State;

"Expresses confidence in the proposals which the Commission of Reforms is elaborating, and in the consequences which will be given to them;

"Passes to the Order of the Day, and decides to proceed without delay to the examination of the projected law of the 7th August, 1901, on the Government of the Colonial Possessions of Belgium."

M. Masson's Resolution.

M. MASSON:—If you will allow me, Sir (addressing the Speaker), I will also read out a Resolution, which I have drafted, and which bears the signatures of MM. Neujean, Janson, Mechelynck, Vandervelde, and my own:—

"The House, taking note of the constitution of the Commission for Reforms, following upon the disclosures made by the Commission of Inquiry instituted by the Congo State, and awaiting the effects of this measure;

"Considering that, before any discussion on the eventual taking over of the Congo, Belgium must be placed in a position to appreciate all the consequences which might result from annexation, without pre-judging the principle of the latter;

"And that, in this respect, it is especially necessary that the Government should demand from the Congo State the communication of all documents, accounts and reports of a nature to enlighten Parliament;

"Expresses the desire that the Central Committee of the House shall be invoked, without delay, to examine the Bill of 7th August, 1901, on the Government of the Colonial Possessions of Belgium, and passes to the Order of the Day."

THE SPEAKER:—M. Woeste is in possession of the House.

Speech by M. Woeste.

M. Woeste:—Gentlemen, the debate which is before the House was opened by a prejudiced speech (protests on the extreme left). No doubt, here and there within it were to be noted a few platonic compliments towards the Congo enterprise, but criticism was not the less long, constant, or bitter on that account. Everything was blamed, everything was condemned; the past, the present, were not pardoned by M. Vandervelde; and as for the future, he stigmatised it in advance by saying that the Congo State was incapable of reforming itself. So implacable an indictment does not respond, in my opinion, to the average opinion of the public, and it will not be favourably received by the country. I do not deny that a sort of gale is at present blowing upon the Congo State. This gale has come from England, and has crossed the channel. England had accustomed us to expect more sympathy and good feeling. I would point out, however, that there are many English statesmen who render homage to the grandeur, to the importance, to the brilliancy of the Congo enterprise.*

M. Lorand:—Mr. Chamberlain notably.†

M. Woeste:—I appeal to the old sentiments of friendship of England for Belgium, and I express the hope, on the one hand, that the British Government will not associate itself with the exaggerations which have been manifested by a few of its citizens, and that, on the other hand, by an arrangement honourable for the two parties, the British Government will recognise the rights which a formal Convention has granted to the Congo State in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. But, however this may be, the attacks of which I speak have crossed the channel; they have found in Belgium a feeding ground in that school of disparagement whose adepts are numerous in our country, and whose mission it is to criticise everything which emanates from Belgium. Let one place before many Belgians an enterprise, an institution, an establishment created by their compatriots, and they will not seek to find in it any advantage; they will merely look for defects in detail. Is there a shadow in a picture—they will only see that shadow; they will make the entire picture of that shadow. As far as I am concerned, gentlemen, I do not associate myself with this injustice. I was one of the first to help, with my vote and with my voice, the Congo enterprise; and I remain attached to that enterprise, whose grandeur I cannot, without injustice, fail to recognise. The Commission of Inquiry itself admitted that it had felt, in travelling in the Congo, a sense of wonderment. Is it not true that, twenty-five years ago, the Congo was delivered over to murders, to pillage, to cannibalism, to the slave trade, to hateful superstitions? Is it

* What a pity M. Woeste did not tell us who they were! Perhaps he includes Sir Hugh Gilzean Reid and Sir Alfred Jones amongst English "statesmen"!

† Mr. Chamberlain, I believe, urged the late Government (when he was a member of it) upon repeated occasions, some years ago, to exercise British rights of Consular jurisdiction in the Congo, owing to the disgraceful treatment of British native subjects in the Congo State. He it was who forbade any further authorised recruiting, on the part of Congo State agents, for labour in the British West African Colonies.

not true that it was a closed continent, and that to-day it is open, thanks to the initiative of the King of the Belgians? Is it not true that the Congo State, constituted in the heart of Africa, boasts of a regular system of administration? Is it not true, too, that all moral civilisation and religious interests are therein protected? Is it not true that numerous ways of communication have been opened, allowing relations between the natives,* and relations between the natives and foreigners? Is it not true that commercial relations have been established between the Congo State and the greater part of the European States, and Belgium, and that our compatriots feel the salutary effects of this? Could Belgium, under these conditions, decline to consider the Congo as becoming one day her Colony? I have just heard, in the Resolution presented by the Left, that opinion is reserved in this respect. No doubt the Belgian Chamber is not called upon at this moment to give a vote on the subject, but, to allow it to be thought that Belgium might one day renounce the Congo, would be an ingratitude towards the Sovereign which created it! It would be for Belgium a real moral decadence, because she would be renouncing to contribute to the work of civilisation in Africa.† It would also be an immense deception for our compatriots who have considered, and who still consider, the Congo a field of activity open to their efforts and their labours. So, gentlemen, the accusers of the Congo do not place themselves precisely upon that ground; what they say is, that out in the Congo there is a system to be indicted, that there are numerous abuses, that these abuses must be stigmatised, that they must disappear. Gentlemen, those who speak thus seem to me to commit, in certain respects, a double error. But, assuredly, I am not amongst those who desire that abuses which have been pointed out should not disappear, but how great is the error of those who think that in a day, or even in a few years, a barbarous country can be transformed into a civilised one.‡ Civilisation has had a struggle there. It has had a struggle elsewhere, against inveterate habits, against profoundly low customs, against influences of education and environment, and it is only by long continuity of effort that the natives can be raised from this degraded state. Remember, gentlemen, the origin of all European States. Remember the origin of the French monarchy. What illimitable disorders, what crimes were committed for several centuries, which only disappeared under the persistent influence of Christianity. History teaches us that it is only in the long run that public conscience can be improved, and customs humanised.

M. Vandervelde:—But it is not the natives who commit these abuses!

M. Hoyois:—The natives are concerned in them, notably the sentries.

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* Who cannot leave their villages without a permit.

† She has certainly not contributed to it, hitherto!

‡ The point is, that a country in a condition of primitive barbarism is being degraded by this so-called civilisation to a level infinitely lower than its original state, and that, after twenty years of King Leopold's personal rule, the natives are fewer in number, more impoverished, more wretched, than at any previous period of their history.

M. Woeste:—I did not catch what M. Hoyois said.

M. Hoyois:—I replied to M. Vandervelde, who has just said that the natives are not concerned in the abuses.

M. Lorand:—The abuses are attributable to the White men, that is what we say. The natives are the victims.

M. Hoyois:—They are also attributable to the natives.

M. Lorand:—To natives armed by the Whites for rubber raiding.

M. Hoyois:—You can discuss that later on.

M. Woeste:—Alongside this primary error there is a secondary one, and that is the idea that a barbarous country can be governed on the lines of a civilised country. No doubt we must approximate to these lines as much as possible, but account must be taken of the mental condition of those whose civilisation* is aimed at. Proceedings which might have full success in our country, would be doomed there to complete sterility. Where you have an advanced state of civilisation, force must be set aside as much as possible. In barbarous countries, among infant peoples, coercion is often necessary; authority must be felt, in order to be respected. It is due to the influence of the two errors which I am pointing out that so many inaccurate judgments have been pronounced, and are still pronounced, on the Congo State. The Congo State is looked upon, and I understand the desire up to a certain point, as another Belgium. I hope, gentlemen, it may be so one day; but, before this day comes, we must admit the necessity in which the governing element finds itself of often employing means other than those which are current in our civilised Europe. The Belgian Government is asked what it means to do to prevent the state of affairs which has been pointed out, as if the Belgian Government were the Government of the Congo State! When one goes to the root of matters, it will be recognised that the personality aimed at here is the Sovereign of the Congo State himself.

M. A. Daens:—That is obvious.

M. Woeste:—It is obvious, I am told! I thank the interrupter for this admission.

M. Daens:—He deserves thanks.

M. Woeste:—He deserves it! Now I no longer thank the interrupter (laughter on the extreme left).

M. Daens:—Do not overdo your talent.

M. Woeste:—Who amongst us would have had sufficient initiative and organising capacity to create the Congo State? Who amongst us would have had sufficient initiative and organising capacity to drag Europe, in a certain measure, behind him?† Who

* What hypocrisy is this! The whole Bench of Bishops, and the Curia combined, would be unequal to the task of civilising the "*civilisers*" of the Congo natives.

† The claims of duplicity and violation of the plighted word, or superlative hypocrisy, might also be added.

amongst us would have had sufficient initiative and organising capacity to create in twenty-five years this State, in giving to it an administration, judicial machinery, a regular police, and having already succeeded, in a large measure, in humanising the savage customs which prevailed therein? If such be the case, how can it be suggested that he who created and organised the Congo, should be incapable of assisting in its development? While associating myself with all my heart with the desire put forward by M. Beernaert, by virtue of which the House is asked to examine the proposed Bill on the government of Colonial possessions, I must point out that a country like the Congo cannot be governed like a country with a Parliamentary system. A representative system is fitted for advanced civilisations, but not for civilisations in a primitive state.* Emile Augier placed in the mouth of Richelieu these words: "Despotism alone brings order out of chaos." I do not maintain that despotism should use any kind of means to do so, but I maintain that it is from personal power that energetic initiative, rapidly executed, can be expected, which obtains in a few years magnificent results such as those obtained in the Congo.†

M. LORAND:—Despotisms like those of Russia, Turkey and the Congo!

M. WOESTE:—Gentlemen, I hold in my hand a remarkable code of laws and regulations, which have been promulgated for the Congo for the last twenty-five years. If the Congo had been under a Parliamentary *régime*, if the Belgian House had been expected to deliberate with regard to it, I state as a fact that not a twentieth part of these laws would have been drafted; not a twentieth part of these regulations would have been issued.‡

M. VANDERVELDE:—Such as the forty hours law, for instance!

M. WOESTE:—This is what must be recognised. This is what common sense and history teach us; but we are told there are many abuses there. M. Vandervelde told us: "I pointed out these abuses in the past; I was not believed; now facts confirm my statements." The honourable member is mistaken. It was never denied that abuses existed in the Congo, but to this admission was added that it was almost impossible that there should not be any. These abuses arise from the immensity of the territory, from the small number of Belgians who administrate it, from ingrained habits which object to the innovations introduced by the Belgians.§ And also—why should I not say so?—from the fact that, especially

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* This, of course, is burking the whole question. The point is, not that the Congo should be governed as Belgium is governed, but that the Belgian Parliament and Public should be in a position to control the Congo administration, which at present they are not in a position to do.

† Magnificent results for King Leopold personally, and for the financiers in partnership with him, but for the natives of the country a very abomination of desolation.

‡ And the Congo State would have been better off, probably. At any rate, it could not have been in a worse position than it is in to-day—"code" and all.

§ Such as the *chicotte*, the chain-gang, the hostage house, never-ending levies in various produce and cultivated food-stuffs; levies in wife and child, in life and limb.

at first, the officials have not always been picked.† When the King initiated the Congo enterprise, there were a number of people who considered his action as utopian. Belgians whose position at home is a stable and sure one were little tempted to emigrate into unknown regions, and to risk their lives and their future therein. It was necessary to accept the services of all willing men who came forward. But it is not the less true that as the enterprise grew, and as it will grow, the *personnel* will steadily improve,* and that this *personnel* will consider its honour is involved in causing the abuses which have been pointed out to disappear. The only reproach which might be brought against the Congo State, if it be founded, would be that, when abuses have been pointed out to it, it has not wished to suppress them. Now, gentlemen, if we consult the laws of the Congo, and the regulations which have been issued, and to which I alluded a moment ago, it will be seen that the constant effort of those who direct the Congo State has been to place the Congo under a regular and normal *régime*,‡ and when, latterly, *lacunæ* have been shown in its legislation, when necessary reforms were pointed to, and abuses requiring suppression, the Congo State itself constituted a Commission of Inquiry, and when the latter made its report, it was again the Congo State, which, without delay, appointed another Commission to prepare the necessary legislation required to bring about reforms.§ M. Vandervelde put on one side the work of this Commission. According to him, reforms will not be carried out, because the Congo State is incapable of reforming itself. It is here that the system of personal hostility to the Sovereign of the Congo State appears. It is also on this point that the honourable member, I am convinced, will not be followed by public opinion. The direct intervention of Belgium in the Congo State is asked for, as if Belgium had such a right to exercise, such a mission to fulfil.

M. Terwagne:—She has the right to pay!

M. Mansart:—And to furnish men!

M. Woeste:—The argument is based on two grounds; first, that Belgium lends to the Congo State her officials, and her officers.

M. Mansart:—And pays them the while!

M. Woeste:—Now, it is not Belgium who lends them. The Belgian State does not lend them as a State, but the Belgian State grants individual permission (outcry on the extreme left).

M. Vandervelde:—That is inaccurate. They are alleged to be drawn from the Institute of Military Cartography.

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† On the contrary, there has been a steady declension of the type and *morale* of the official on the Congo, dragged down by the system to its level.

* The exact contrary is the case under the present system.

‡ Why has the Congo Government suppressed the judgments in cases of atrocities, passed by its own Law Courts, during the last ten years? Why does the Governor-General stop criminal actions against White men? Why are Europeans, accused of monstrous crimes, allowed to return home unmolested? Why is the Judiciary dependent upon the Executive, which, itself, violates the laws of the land?

§ A Commission, three-fourths composed of the very men who have directed, up to the present, the vast system of criminal oppression now exposed.

M. BERTRAND:—And they are paid!

M. WOESTE:—They are withdrawn from the Institute of Military Cartography, and no one is ignorant of the fact that it is to take service on the Congo, and we are asked to deny to Belgians the right to go out there to contribute in expanding the work of civilisation!* So far as I am concerned, far from blaming the Government, I congratulate it on having allowed our officers to go to the Congo. It has also been made a matter of complaint that the officers, who felt themselves bound to devote their energies to the Congo State, should still retain their salaries as Belgian officers! What! Here are officers who leave their country, their family, perhaps their future hopes, who expose themselves to a destructive climate, and to all the risks of pacific and other conquests,† which it may be necessary to undertake in this distant country, and Belgium would be ungenerous enough to withhold from these men of noble heart a legitimate remuneration! Far be it from me to uphold such a contention!

M. MANSART:—Therefore, Belgium has something to do with the Congo after all!

M. WOESTE:—Another motive is invoked, to justify the intervention of Belgium. We are told, "Read the Act of Berlin. There is in that Act an Article, Article 6, which ensures the protection to the natives." Yes, Belgium was happy to be able to give her assent to the Act of Berlin, and notably to Article 6. The Congo State did the same. How colossal is the error, however, of those who think that, because this programme has been legitimately drawn up, we can apply it to the Congo from one day to the next by extending over the Congo territory a magic wand, and ensure everywhere the protection of the native, wherever he may be! All this can only be a work of time. The bitter critics of the Congo State have not sought to show us that if the Congo were annexed at the present time to Belgium, and if the Belgian Government administered the Congo from Brussels, it would be in a better position than the Congo State to ensure the protection of the natives.‡ Such an attempt will not be made. It would go against

* The Italian Government, which at one time lent considerably over one hundred officers of its army to the Congo State, at King Leopold's pressing request, because, as he said, he could not find in the Belgian Army a sufficiency of reliable men, has come to the conclusion that the work which the officers of the Congo Army are compelled to perform is not a work of civilisation, but a work of brigandage. It has decided that henceforth no Italian officer will, under any circumstances whatever, be allowed to join King Leopold's Congo Army, and in less than a year from now, there will not be a single Italian officer left on the Congo. The Italian Government has greater regard for the honour of its officers than M. Woeste for the honour of the Belgian Army.

† Especially "other"!

‡ No doubt, if M. Woeste and his friends had their way, the same system which King Leopold, as personal ruler, has applied to the Congo territories, would also be applied to the Congo territories by Belgium. But it is a poor compliment to Belgium to suppose that such would be the case. If it were, assuming annexation to take place, Belgium herself would be confronted with the same implacable and determined censure which has been visited upon the Congo State by those who have some regard for the responsibilities and the pledges undertaken by civilisation in respect to the Congo natives. If Belgium desires to receive the sanction and the support of civilisation for a direct administration of the Congo by herself, she will do well to clip the wings of M. Woeste and his friends.

reason and history. But still, we are told, there are abuses. There are reprehensible things taking place in the Congo. Assuredly, and I admitted so much a moment ago, but what exaggeration there is also. Thus, M. Vandervelde did not hesitate to say that the slave trade was still rife in the Congo. But what is the slave trade? It consists in the fact that men who, being owners of other men, sell the latter.† Now, to justify the charge which the honourable member directed against the Congo State, what does he advance? He quoted the fact that recruiting was carried out in the Congo on the basis of bonuses granted to the recruiters. Is that, gentlemen, the slave trade? I appeal to your common sense, and to your consciences. No one will reply in the affirmative. These recruiting operations constitute a legitimate‡ act in themselves, and the labour which the recruiters undertake deserves recompense. Certainly, the sojourn of Arabs in the Congo has left some traces. Mohammedans from Zanzibar, and Arabised natives, have formed here and there small communities where disguised slavery and gross immorality is practised. We know that. The Congo State has sought, to the extent which was humanely possible, to remedy this state of affairs. The past is for us a guarantee of the future. What it has already done it will continue to do, but the injustice consists in saying that, in a country eighty times as large as Belgium, and in twenty-five years, all ills can be extirpated, as it were, instantaneously.* Abuses have been spoken of. I return to the criticisms directed against the Congo State. The land *régime* is complained of. In this connection, what is the paramount factor? It is shown by the Commission of Inquiry itself in the following terms: "The greater portion of the land in the Congo is not cultivated." Not being cultivated, and the natives not being able to produce titles to these lands (outcry on the Socialist benches), they belong to the State in strict law, and in conformity with general principles (laughter on the same benches). But, along with the question of law, there is the question of practice, and it was precisely to regulate the latter question that the Commission of Reforms has been constituted. The fact is that the natives went and came. They gathered the produce of the forests, not, as has been insinuated, in order to collect rubber, because rubber was not collected by them.

M. Vandervelde:—That is inaccurate.

M. Woeste:—In any case, they did collect some produce, and I understand that, under these conditions, the Congo State, in constituting the Commission for Reforms, desired especially to draw its attention to this point, in order to give greater satisfaction to the natives than that which they possess through the strict and rigorous application of the principles to which I referred a moment ago. Complaint has also been made that the natives were compelled to work; that a labour tax was imposed upon them. What

† This is a very limited description.

‡ It is, then, legitimate to raid villages, and seize able-bodied men, chain them, and take them off to the military camps to be trained?

* The point is, of course, that in the last twenty years, upon the natural ills of the country have been grafted new ills, transcending immeasurably those which existed before.

a singular reproach! Is it not by work that man is formed; that man rises; that man realises the full possession of his dignity?* And how can it be denied that the Congo State, by teaching the natives to work, contributes in the highest degree to a civilising effort? Moreover, the Congo State has given to this country a system of regular administration and law. These are advantages whose effects are felt by the natives.† It is fair that they should pay for the protection which is assured to them, as we pay in our country for the advantages which result from the protection guaranteed to our people and our property.‡ And, seeing that in the Congo, payment cannot be made in money, is it astonishing that such payment should be made in labour, especially when, as I pointed out a moment ago, this labour is demanded from peoples sunk in idleness up to the present, and which will, little by little, accustom them to a regular life? We find the Commission of Inquiry saying:—

"We have recognised the necessity in the Congo of a labour tax. The amount of this tax, fixed at forty hours per month, appeared to us equitable. Neither do we propose to contest the legitimacy of the principle of coercion inscribed in the law. Nevertheless, we consider that, in the application of this law, the officials should show the greatest toleration."

Has this toleration always been employed? It seems that it has not. But that the intentions themselves of the Congo State are not here in question, the Commission of Inquiry gives an instance:

"Whatever may be thought, it says, of native ideas, proceedings such as the detention of women as hostages are too violently opposed to our ideas of justice to be tolerated . . . ."

Certain newspapers stopped the above quotation at this point. But this is how the Commission continues:

"The State has prohibited this practice for a long time past, but without succeeding in suppressing it."§

It is always thus that things occur in countries which are still barbarous like the Congo. A principle is laid down, it is sought to be applied, and cannot be applied at once in a complete manner; that is a matter of time. Those who refuse to recognise that time has here to play a great part, forget the lessons of history; and if they will not admit those lessons, they must be left to the one-sided views which influence them. Another complaint has been made against the Congo State. It has been said that the profits which accrue from the exploitation of the Congo had gone

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* By giving to an alien Administration 286 days labour in the year for nothing?

† For instance—in cases of atrocities perpetrated by Europeans upon natives in the Upper Congo, native witnesses have been compelled to travel over 1,000 miles from their homes to give evidence! Even the Commission of Inquiry admits that they seldom return. A curious kind of "advantage"!

‡ The protection guaranteed to the natives by the Congo State consists in appropriating their property, and in claiming their persons for the benefit of the "State," which consists of King Leopold, his financial friends, and 2,000 employees, for which protection the Congo native is subjected to a life of incessant and unremunerated toil in the interests of his taskmasters, to atrocious punishments, and to every form of violence from the whip to the bullet. The dishonesty of the whole speech is such, however, that comment is more or less of a superfluity.

§ It has suppressed it on paper, and known of its perpetuation in practice. Its Governor-Generals have issued circulars authorising the taking of hostages, making no distinction between men and women.

to Belgium, continue to go to Belgium—had served, and continue to serve, Belgian enterprises. Gentlemen, in the note which was sent in 1901 to the Central Committee of this House, which note was concerned in settling definitely the situation of the Congo State towards Belgium, we may read the following passage:—

"The Congo State declares once more that it has no private objects or interests, and that it pursues its mission with the view to the sole advantage of Belgium. Its past bears witness to, and confirms the sincerity of this declaration. Its action, its constant effort to increase the economic prosperity of Belgium, its persevering efforts to this effect, the results which it has obtained, protest against certain suspicions which exist at the present time, and which hardly seem to be inspired by the public interest."

That was a great and noble thought, which should be everywhere appreciated in our country. The Congo has been created and organised in the interests of the country which one day will be its mother country.* Is it not right that Belgium should profit in a fair measure from the benefits which she is giving to the Congo? How can one fail to recognise, for instance, that the revenues which have served to construct the Colonial Palace at Tervueren, allow of our countrymen appreciating the advantages which result from closer relationship with the Congo?† How can it be contended that these revenues, thus applied, are not useful to the two States, and to the two peoples? I am, moreover, convinced that the Congo State will understand increasingly that, without wishing to withdraw absolutely from Belgium the revenues obtained from the Congo, it is necessary to devote a large portion of its resources, perhaps the greater portion, to improving the morality, the civilisation, and the development of the Congo from every point of view.

M. VANDERVELDE:—That will be the beginning of wisdom.

M. WOESTE:—I am told it will be the beginning of wisdom. I do not admit the accuracy of the interruption, because I have said already that the Congo was created and organised, thanks to the efforts and to the labours of the King and of Belgium,‡ and that it is legitimate that the profits of these efforts and this labour should not be wholly withheld from Belgium. But we are entering a new phase, and this new phase should be characterised, in my opinion, by a fair division. The revenues of the Congo should be used, before anything else, for the moral and intellectual improvement of the natives, in the organising of their country; the balance, being used for Belgium, will cause Belgium to devote herself more and more to the needs of the future Colony. In connection with the present discussion, the question of the annexation of the Congo by Belgium has been mentioned, but the fact that annexation is not actually before the country appears to be lost sight of. In order that it should be before the country, the Congo would have to be offered to us.

M. VANDERVELDE:—It may be offered to us to-morrow.

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* When the King has sucked it dry as a squeezed lemon!

† To breed pupils of the Leopoldian system, and propagate still further the slave-trade spirit in Belgium and outside of it.

‡ Four-fifths of the earlier pioneers of the Congo were not Belgians at all, but Englishmen, Americans, Germans, etc.

M. Woeste:—It is true that at a given moment the Sovereign King said to Belgium: "If you wish to annex the Congo you can do so; if you do not wish to annex it, I leave a will by which the Congo may belong to you after me." But in 1901, when the problem of settling definitely the relationship between Belgium and the Congo came up for examination, the alternatives before Parliament were clearly indicated in a letter written on the 28th March, 1901, by Baron Van Eetvelde to M. de Smet de Naeyer, to be communicated to the House. These alternatives were stated as follows:—

"If Belgium declares for annexation, the Congo Government will lend her all its help. If Belgium declares against annexation, the Congo Government will pay the interest on the sums advanced, and the capital itself, according to the terms of the Convention of 1890, and of the law of the 29th June, 1895, however onerous this charge may be. If Belgium prefers not to give her opinion at the present moment on the question of annexation, if she prefers to leave the door open, and consequently postpone the payment of the interest on the loan and the reimbursement of the capital, the Congo State is prepared to accept this solution also."

It was on the third alternative that the Congo State and the Belgian Parliament agreed, and it was also to urge that third alternative upon Parliament that, in the letter which the Sovereign of the Congo did me the honour to send me on the 11th June, 1901, he crystallised the thought which dictated his action. The House will allow me to recall two extracts from that letter:—

"If annexation were now voted—that is to say, before the time has come when annexation can give to Belgium all the benefits which I wish to assure to her—the Congo State will naturally refuse to continue its administration, to participate in a sort of mixed government, which in practice would be a veritable chaos, and which would only produce, internally and externally, conflicting influences and misunderstandings. Can it be conceived that, simultaneously, a desire is expressed to annex the State, and that the State should continue for several years its *ad interim* task? It must be recognised that Belgium is not ready, and is not in a position to replace, at the present time, the existing administration."*

The above passage showed the impossibility of immediate annexation. But, revealing more clearly his thought in another passage, to which the House finally adhered implicitly, the Sovereign added:—

"A gift to Belgium of a notable part of my property, the option given spontaneously to Belgium to take possession of the Congo when she cares to, my present demand to Belgium not to annex the Congo until it is wholly

* What happened was, of course, this: of the three alternatives, the first two were put forward and acquiesced in for the sake of form; the third was insisted upon, which was made quite clear at the time by the letter to which M. Woeste refers. The Sovereign of the Congo State did not want Belgium to annex the Congo then; he does not want Belgium to annex the Congo now, for the very simple reason that, if annexation took place, not only would he have to render an account of the sums which he has personally appropriated from the Congo revenues, but he would also be compelled to disgorge the real accounts of revenue and expenditure of the Congo State, and throw light upon the loans which the Congo State has contracted. He would also have to renounce in future the incontestable advantages of pillaging the Congo revenues at his own will and pleasure, and he would have to abandon raising loans on the Congo State, the proceeds of which are applied by him to other enterprises and speculations, and, in short, to any objects which he may think fit. While reformers in this country are compelled to adopt an attitude more or less reserved towards the question of Belgian annexation, few of them, we should imagine, are its determined opponents, but King Leopold most certainly is.

productive, are facts which manifest clearly in all its disinterestedness my unshakeable and royal attachment to the country to whose services I have consecrated my life."†

Inspired by these ideas, the Conventions of 1901 were arrived at. The King, taking note of the intentions of Belgium, demanded the latter not to annex the Congo before it was wholly productive. No voice was finally raised to contend that it should be otherwise, and it is these arrangements which regulate at the present time the relations between the Congo State and our country. No doubt, gentlemen, the King would be willing to offer us the Congo State once more, and at once; but, as I have just pointed out, the question of annexation cannot be entertained before this new offer has been put forward. At the present moment we are faced by the will and testament of the King. Under these circumstances, how can M. Vandervelde, without even making a formal proposal on this subject, have asked Parliament to order a Parliamentary inquiry relating to the Congo? Assuredly, Belgium would have the right to do so, if the Congo State belonged to her. But it would be an inauguration without precedent in the history of peoples, without possible justification, if one State took upon itself to institute an inquiry relating to affairs which take place in another State which does not belong to it.

M. Vandervelde:—The relations between Belgium and the Congo are also without precedent in history.

M. Woeste:—In certain respects, yes. However, the relations actually prevailing between the Congo and Belgium are no other than the relations of a special good-will, of a real sympathy. (Ironical laughter on the extreme left.) I would go further, and say that they are relations born, in a measure, from the expectation which belongs to Belgium, but they do not go beyond that point; and it remains true that the Congo State does not belong to Belgium, and that, consequently, we should be ill inspired to intervene directly in its affairs. Gentlemen, I have attempted to be as brief as possible. I think, however, that I have placed matters from the true point of view, from the point of view which they should be looked at. Following the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have not denied, and I do not deny, that reforms are useful in the Congo State, that they may be even necessary. Neither have I denied, and neither do I deny, that regrettable events have occurred therein, although it is difficult to conceive how it could have been otherwise. But, taking the enterprise as a

† It is, perhaps, just as well that the worthy Mr. Pecksniff is no longer amongst us, for assuredly his star would have been dimmed by this royal penman. The Congo State, if we regard it as a tropical dependency, has been wholly productive, otherwise a paying concern for many years past; but, in his exalted "disinterestedness," in his passionate desire that Belgium should reap where her Sovereign has sown, King Leopold has thought fit to prevent this knowledge from reaching the ears of his people, and has steadily drawn, for the last ten years, from the Congo revenues, millions of francs, which he has appropriated to purposes of his own, and which he has not accounted for, and has issued to the world and to Belgium, budgetary estimates showing the Congo State to be a losing concern. Meanwhile, the Congo State, instead of approaching a period of absolute productiveness, is becoming increasingly impoverished. The genius of Gilbert and Sullivan would alone do justice to the situation.

whole, it must be admitted that it deserves praise and encouragement, not blame and criticism, and this is why, far from censuring the Congo State, I desire, in conclusion, only to address towards it words of cordial sympathy. I desire also that the Congo State shall, in order to fulfil its mission, protect more and more all the moral, intellectual and religious affairs which are developing themselves so freely out there. Latterly the missionaries have been violently attacked.* They were not sufficiently heard; their establishments were not sufficiently inspected! But facts speak louder than attacks and insinuations; the missionaries clear the ground; they found schools; they propagate the Bible (which is always good tidings); they improve the natives by familiarising them with a regular and normal life; they influence them towards the law of work; they impose upon them a moral discipline; and, in a word, they remove them from savage life. These services, which their predecessors have rendered to all European States, and to America, are services which cannot be exaggerated. They testify higher than the critics and censorians who do not know them, who have not studied their work, who allow themselves to be influenced by I do not know what blamable hatred. One day they will be thanked for what they have done in the Congo, as history thanks the priests and the nuns who have contributed to the civilisation of European and American States. The work of the Congo will remain, I am convinced, in all impartial eyes, a grand and fine enterprise. Such also will be the judgment of posterity.† Whatever may be done, whatever may be said, it will be to the honour of King Leopold II., as it will be to the honour also of all those in Belgium who, only considering the moral and material interests of the native population . . . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—The shareholders of the A.B.I.R., for instance (laughter on the extreme left).

M. WOESTE:— . . . have devoted themselves to those interests, following the King, and have refused to allow themselves to be shaken by critics, the least of whose faults is a total lack of generosity and justice. I am tempted to say, in closing, to the Congo State, "Courage, courage. (Laughter and outcry on the extreme left.) No human enterprise is sheltered from charges and calumnies; reform what it may be necessary to reform in your affairs, reform . . . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—Very good, very good!

M. WOESTE:— . . . but allow the flood of calumnies and charges to pass without allowing yourself to be arrested in your progressive march. These charges will fall heavily on those who bring them (applause on the right).

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* By whom? By the King's Commission!

† M. Woeste is no more complimentary to posterity than he is to Belgium.

Speech by M. Colfs.†

M. Colfs:—Gentlemen, in 1896 I denounced in this House the reprehensible events which are taking place in the Congo—villages burned by white men, the slave trade practised by Belgians, the most ignoble vices increasing among certain groups of young men. To that part of my speech not a word was uttered in reply. In 1900, I returned once more to the charge. M. de Favereau had read out to the House, on behalf of the Congo administration, a strong protest against the charges made.. No fact had been proved, he said, but if abuse had occurred it was a contravention of instructions, and the guilty parties would be severely punished. So the document read. The effusion of the Congo State closed with a flourish of trumpets, which M. Cousebant* endorsed by waving the Belgian flag. Against these statements I produced proofs. I showed that sanguinary instructions were issued; were executed by certain Belgian officers, alas! I offered other proofs, but they took good care not to ask me to communicate them, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs thought himself very clever, in order to weaken the effect which these revelations might have produced, to carp at certain words; quite wrongly, as I showed him later on in the discussion. I was not allowed to reply to the objections of another member. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry proves that the abuses which had been pointed out to me at that time, and of which I offered proof, are numerous.

Neither was any importance attached to the revelations which were brought forward in other parts of the House. Thus the smear of shame graven upon our national honour; a shame which might have been effaced ten years ago, and which from henceforth no one can profess to ignore, has increased to such an extent that—I say it with pain, and with grief—history will retain the memory of it. Later on we shall ask ourselves why so much effort and so much courage was necessary, in order to tell a small part of the truth, and how it happened that so many people, amongst whom are many honourable men, were able to band themselves together, in order to bring about a conspiracy of silence. We shall ask ourselves what was the power strong enough to use all this for its own profit.

As for me, I have the right—I have suffered not a little on that account—to remind the House that I implored the Government not to play the part of Pontius Pilate by washing its hands of the blood of our brethren spilled on African soil. Last Tuesday, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that we had not the right to intervene, that neither the Treaty of Berlin nor the Brussels Convention authorised us to do so. But the rights of Belgian control are very much stronger than those stipulated in these Treaties. They are embodied in a Convention agreed to between Belgium and the Congo State, when the latter was in need of our

† *Le Patriote* has pointed out in an article (May) that since this speech was delivered, the speaker has been deliberately passed over by the King, in respect to the periodical decorations to which, it seems, Belgian members of Parliament are entitled by customary usage.

* Minister for War.

pecuniary assistance. They are manifest, again, in the circumstance that our Minister for War lends to the Congo State officers on active service, with special advantages, and at the expense of the Belgian tax-payer, which advantages are guaranteed to no officer who may be desirous of following out any other mission but this one particular mission. They are embodied still more so in the fact of the intervention of Belgian diplomatic agents with foreign Powers when the question of foreign relationship is under discussion. **Contrary to its duty, the Belgian Government has constituted itself the systematic defender of the Congo administration.** It has, moreover, consented to the abandonment by Belgium of all right of control; so much so that by a deliberate policy the only mission left to Belgium in regard to the Congo State is to cover it and protect it under any circumstances, and this after having helped the birth and the development of that State! I maintain that the Belgian Government and the Belgian Parliament have, to a very much larger extent than foreign Parliaments and Governments, the right and the duty to concern themselves with what goes on in the Congo. The example of Italy, which, in face of the facts we know, no longer authorises her officers, even on leave, to go to this part of Africa, is a reproach to us. Some notable Statesmen here were filled with very grave anxiety when the proposal was made that the King should be allowed to fuse the two crowns.* In order to dissipate their apprehensions, very fine promises were made, and very weighty guarantees uttered. I am convinced that, after what we have experienced, their anxiety would have been increased.

From 1895 onwards, the conspiracy against truth has been organised from top to bottom, under well-nigh unbelievable conditions, in order to hide the crimes which are committed in the Congo.† But justice, which triumphs sooner or later, has shown up calumny, and struck down victorious crime. This celestial justice has been manifested. The Commission of Inquiry was appointed under the pressure of Foreign Public Opinion. This Inquiry has provided a happy channel of escape, because if it had not been decided upon, an International Conference would have assembled, and the Congo State would certainly have suffered. This Commission has admitted as authentic the greater part of the charges brought even by foreigners, and thus at one blow has disposed of the insinuations which the Congo State—and certain of our colleagues with it—brought forward to meet all opposition, by imputing to it co-operation with the foreigner against the interests of Belgium, whose interests were deliberately confounded with the interests of the Congo State. M. Woeste attempted to excuse the acts of officials of the State and agents of the Companies. The Report of the Commission answers him. Ten years ago, I demanded a Commission of Inquiry; the suggestion was not even discussed, which entitles me to say that inquiry was feared. What was

* That is to say, to be at once Sovereign of the Congo State and King of the Belgians.

† No truer words were ever spoken. Never has carefully-calculated mendacity reached heights so serene, or been maintained by means more infamous.

refused to a Belgian deputy, was granted to English Protestant missionaries, whose malignant intentions are, however, known.* I demand that the control of Belgium shall be effective, incessant. In very truth, our representatives, employed by the Congo State, are, above all, the representatives of the Congo State itself, since they can only be appointed by the head of that State. The Congo State is, perhaps, the only State in the world where Belgians cannot be protected against the local authorities.§ Our missionaries have less liberty than foreign missionaries. **They are expected to keep silence, and, as the *Bien Public* has so well put it, even from our missionaries, optimistic statements are alont tolerated. There is, therefore, a gag. This gag is only placed in the mouths of Belgian missionaries, and it was to ensure this result that the Congo State urged so strongly upon the Vatican to agree that Catholic evangelisation on the Congo should be confined exclusively to Belgians.** As for foreign Protestant missionaries, the Congo State dares not touch them.† On the contrary, the Commission of Inquiry eulogises them.‡ This is what Belgium has retained from so many sacrifices—a state of subjection for her children! I ask the missionaries to remember that they are Belgians, that they are entitled to enjoy on the Congo the rights conferred upon all nations, and upon all religious propaganda by the Berlin Act. Let this system be done away with, and if the Congo State molests our missionaries, let it be at once pilloried by Christian nations.

Numerous Voices:—"Adjourn."

THE SPEAKER:—The House has decided to close the discussion to-morrow. Could you not close your speech to-day?

Cries of "No, no."

THE SPEAKER:—The discussion will then be continued to-morrow.

THIRD DAY'S DEBATE (Feb. 28th).

M. COLFS *(Catholic).* M. LORAND *(Liberal).*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER *(Premier).*

M. VANDERVELDE *(Leader of the Labour Party).*

THE SPEAKER:—Gentlemen, we resume M. Vandervelde's interpellation. M. Colfs will continue his speech.

M. COLFS:—Gentlemen, at the end of yesterday's sitting, I said that it is only the Catholic missionaries who are gagged; the Protestant missionaries can go everywhere, collect evidence, provoke

* It was granted, not to Protestant missionaries, but to British public opinion. If malignancy means protesting when men, women and children are shot down, ruthlessly murdered and tortured under one's very eyes, then the Protestant missionaries are malignant.

§ In the Senate, in April last, Count d'Ursel asked that a Belgian Consul be appointed in the Congo State, to protect the interests of Belgians. M. de Favereau refused the request.

† *Vide* the case of M. Stannard, for instance!

‡ Because the Commissioners were convinced of their integrity.

opinion hostile to the Congo State, and we Belgians and Christians are accused of acting with an interested object when we expose the wickedness and the atrocities which take place in the Congo. The missionaries, who have been accused without proof, have protested in their official newspapers, and over the signatures of the heads of the Congo missions they declare, in a document compiled with extreme moderation, that "In certain missions no missionary was called to testify, no missionary was listened to, notwithstanding reiterated offers." Such is the case of the missions specially incriminated by this Report.* Access to certain territory is forbidden to Catholic missionaries,† and they can only settle where the State allows them to do so.§ Thus the State sought to compel them to settle in swampy regions, deprived of all resources, while exacting, for a mere lease of land, a rent seventy times higher than any neighbouring colony.‖ At the end of thirty years, the Congo Government reserves to itself, under this lease the right to expel the missionaries, to benefit by their laborious clearing of the soil, by their costly constructions, residences, schools, orphanages, hospitals, workshops which they may have built, furnished, provided with tools, all obtained from the money of Belgian Catholics, to be utilised by the Congo State to God knows what end. All guarantees are not, therefore, given to our missionaries, whatever people may say.

The principal cause of the uprisings which incessantly take place, and the stamping out of which entail massacres of entire villages, is due to forced labour. We are told that work raises man; reasonable work, yes, but not work such as is imposed on the Congo.‡ We must not forget that the natives are addicted to hunting, fishing, and cultivation. They spend the majority of their time in idleness. Suddenly work is forced upon them, which requires them to be long absent from their homes. In the course of this work they are supervised by black head-corporals *(capitas)*, deliberately chosen from soldiers belonging to hostile tribes. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry says that: —

"According to witnesses, the sentries, especially those who are stationed in the villages, abuse the authority placed in them, making themselves into despots, claiming the women and the foodstuffs, not only for themselves, but for the band of parasites and scallywags which the love of rapine associates with them, and with whom they surround themselves, as by a veritable bodyguard. They kill without pity all those who attempt to resist their exigencies and their whims. The charges brought against the sentries appear to be the outcome of a mass of evidence and official reports."

It is easy to understand what must be the consequence of this. Notwithstanding all its abbreviations, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry has enough to tell us on that score. It cannot be

* The Report of King Leopold's Commissioners.

† And to Protestant missionaries.

§ So with Protestant missionaries.

‖ By the terms of the Loan of 1901, all sums derivable from the sales of land were, I believe, to be devoted to paying off the capital. In other words, the proceeds of the sales would go to Belgium, not to the Congo State. The Sovereign of that State finds he can obtain quite as much for *leasing* land as for selling it, and as, in the former case, the proceeds go towards that mysterious compilation, the Congo State "budget," and not to Belgium, it is seen to be preferable to *lease* land rather than sell it. This point seems to have escaped all the speakers in the debate.

‡ A minimum of 286 days per annum, with the bullet as a stimulant.

maintained that the Congo State was ignorant of these facts;† nor that the regulations fixing labour at forty hours per month were not drafted to deceive Europe.* **The Congo State was fully informed of what was going on,** and when the members of this House protest against this state of affairs, which results in depopulation of vast districts, they are accused of being calumniators, or interested parties. Is the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, then, a tissue of calumnies? When one has read this Report, drawn up by men picked by the Sovereign King, and who do not cease to plead extenuating circumstances in favour of the Congo State, one can only conclude that it would be difficult to calumniate this State! For, indeed, there is nothing which its most pitiless adversaries bring against it, which is not confirmed in this Report.‡ I will not say to the State, "Courage, courage"; I will say to the State, on the contrary, "For pity's sake, stop, become converted, become what you always ought to have been—an agent of humanity and civilisation."

M. Daens:—Very good; that is the truth.

M. Colfs:—As far as I am concerned, it is as a Belgian, loving his country, which he desires to see respected; it is as a Christian that I protest, and I defy anyone to prove that I act in any other interest. But it has been the custom and the principle of the interested adversaries of annexation, and the blind defenders of annexation, to slander their opponents. The blind partisans of a Colonial policy, and especially of a Colonial policy such as is practised by the Congo State, are the only ones who benefit from the present state of affairs. The Minister told us that the Commission of Reforms will shortly inform us of the result of its deliberations.§ Until that moment comes, we must remain suspicious, and I reserve to myself the right of renewing the discussion. The information published in the Press, with regard to the kind of reforms which the Commission proposes to be applied at first, is not calculated to quieten us, and would seem to show a hostile spirit against religion. Another cause we have for suspicion is the way in which the Commission of Reforms is constituted.

M. Woeste:—You are stating things of which you have no knowledge, and which are devoid of all foundation.

M. Colfs:—Have the missionaries been excluded from the Commission, and is that untrue?

M. Woeste:—I say that what is absolutely inaccurate is that the Commission has been imbued with the spirit of which you speak. You ought not to make such charges without having the proof in hand.

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† Which prevail to-day, as they did nearly eighteen months ago, when the Commission found them—*vide* the recent reports of Messrs. Padfield, Stannard and Whiteside.

* This is one of the cardinal facts of the situation. The Congo State knew everything, and denied everything. The Congo Government dare not publish the official records of its own tribunals in the Lower Congo. It dare not publish the official circulars of its Governor-Generals, and its District Commissioners, and its *Chefs de Zone*, demanding, insisting, urging, in one continuous and incessant clamour, the production of increased quantities of indiarubber from the mass of officials throughout the country.

‡ Precisely.

§ Not if the Sovereign of the Congo State can help it!

M. Colfs:—We shall see what the Commission will decide, but I now take note, and no one can deny the fact, that the missionaries have been excluded from the Commission, and that, on the other hand, representatives of accused Companies have been incorporated therein.†

M. Woeste:—The missionaries were excluded therefrom as you and I were excluded!

M. Colfs:—As you and I! It is very curious to see a Commission of Reforms constituted, from which the most impartial elements are excluded, those who have been accused, without being allowed to defend themselves, and whose only object is civilisation, without any thought of self-interest—that is recognised by all, even by the Protestants—when, on the other hand, are included representatives of Companies accused and duly convicted of abominable crimes. **And to them are added the officials who have been the representatives of the policy so completely condemned in the Report!***

Already the Commission of Inquiry has failed on three different points to carry out its mandate.

It declined to investigate what was taking place in the *Domaine de la Couronne;* it accused unjustly, and accepted as true, without counter-inquiry, without even hearing the interested parties, charges against our gallant missionaries. Finally, it omitted a point of capital importance.

It has not made the slightest allusion to the most redoubtable obstacle which civilisation encounters on the Congo, viz., the immorality which flaunts itself publicly and unrestricted, which often filters through from the corrupting European to the corrupted black, drying up in both the resources of physical and moral life, affecting the interests of the native peoples.‡

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† A.B.I.R. and Kasai.

* Precisely, slavers called in to legislate against the new slave trade.

‡ If but one tithe of the erotic abominations prevalent on the Congo could be written down here, people would stand aghast. To deal in specific cases would be possible only in the columns of a medical journal, but one or two general evils may be touched upon. One of them is, undoubtedly, the spread of venereal disease. No more eloquent passage on this subject has, probably, been penned than that contained in the Rev. Dugald Campbell's letter to Mr. Fox-Bourne, on May 14, 1904. Mr. Campbell has laboured for thirteen consecutive years in the Katanga country:—

"The treatment of the down-trodden Congolese, since State occupation, has brought about a moral and material degeneration. Through the gross and wholesale immorality, and forcing of women and girls into lives of shame, African family life and its sanctities have been violated, and the seeds of disease, sown broadcast over the Congo State, are producing their harvest already. Formerly, native conditions put restrictions on the spread of disease, and localised it to small areas. But the 17,000 black Congo soldiers, moved hither and thither to districts removed from their wives and relations, to suit Congo policy, must have women wherever they go, and these must be provided from the district natives."

Sodomy, which, in the opinion of the most experienced missionaries, was totally unknown in the Congo, has been introduced by the European into the A.B.I.R. Concession's territories, and doubtless elsewhere, and the practice is often resorted to upon the people by the sentries at the point of the gun for their edification, as also public incest, and other outrages.

To the homage which M. Verhaegen rendered yesterday to our Catholic missionaries, I will add two passages from a Conference given in Brussels by Commandant Lemaire: —

"In order that a colonial enterprise shall succeed, it is necessary to attach thereto men who only seek satisfaction in the accomplishment of duty, and whose only object is to serve their country, without other thoughts. In this respect, although I am an unbeliever, I have always admired the missionaries, and have never understood the attacks to which they were subjected. . . . I think that no class of Society has the gift of producing perfect colonisers, but, without supecting the good faith of the members of the Commission of Inquiry, I think they made a mistake, and that they were badly informed on the subject of the missionaries."

I regret that the Minister had not a word to say in defence of our courageous missionaries, the civilising element recognised by unbelievers as the best and the most active and disinterested of all. I hope that the deliberations of the Commission for Reforms will have a more serious result than those of the Commission of Control, in which the missionaries were included, but whose labours were kept so secret that, five or six years ago, the *Mouvement Anti-esclavagiste* sceptically asked for news of it—news for which we are still waiting. Is it possible that it never sat at all?* These facts justify our suspicion. I cannot vote the Resolution standing in the name of M. Beernaert, because, on the one hand, it is conceived in altogether too general terms, and appears to approve too vaguely of what has taken place on the Congo, and, on the other hand, it seems to admit in advance, as adequate for the needs of the case, the proposals for reforms which will be the outcome of the deliberations of the Commission, a Commission which has been constituted in an undoubtedly systematic manner, and from which the essential element has been excluded, namely, the missionary element. As for the Resolution proposed by M. Masson and friends, I entirely approve of its first part, and cannot endorse it too emphatically, but I do not see the connection between the premises and the conclusions of the Resolution, which point to the calling together of the Central Committee of the House to examine the pre-supposed project of annexation.

M. Masson: —No, no.

M. Janson: —The question is entirely reserved.

M. Colfs: —We must first of all see clear in all that is going on in the Congo. We must have all the light possible, and, before sitting down, let me say again how infinitely I regret that the name of Belgium has been mixed up with the atrocities committed in the Congo. I hope the Government will intervene at last, and seriously, by refusing to allow its officials and its officers to go to the Congo, and thus compel the Congo State to bring about reforms which we have the right to demand.

The Speaker: —M. Lorand is in command of the House.

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* The speaker is, perhaps, referring to the farcical "Commission for the Protection of the Natives," which was instituted by the Congo State after the first revelations of its hideous policy came to hand, in order to lull public opinion.

Speech by M. Lorand.

M. Lorand:—Gentlemen, if my policy included any sentiments of personal vanity, or even of *amour propre*, it would be easy for me, at the present moment, to give myself the bitter satisfaction of placing side by side the speeches which I have made on the Congo in this House for more than twelve years, the replies made to them by the Government, and the text of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry named by the Congo State itself.

M. de Smet de Naeyer (Premier and Chancellor of the Exchequer):—Notably your speech on the railway!

M. Bertrand:—Do not try to de-rail the debate (laughter).

M. Lorand:—We will speak of the railway when you choose; but the railway is not in question to-day. The object of this debate is the general condition of the Congo State. To-day we see officially confirmed all the charges which we have felt ourselves compelled to bring, not for our good pleasure—rest assured of that—because I fail to see what a Belgian politician can have to gain by incurring the hostility of the Congo State, and each of us must see very clearly what there is to lose by it—but because it was for us a duty. As links ever closer and closer were being forged between the Congo State and Belgium, it was impossible for men who have the interests of our country at heart, of its moral responsibility, and of its honour; it was impossible, I say, for them not to bring facts such as those we have pointed out for long enough, before the House, and not to ask the Government to act, in order to prevent their renewal, and to profit by the relations which it has, necessarily, with the Congo State, daily relationship, to bring about a change in the policy of that State. We were met with blank denials. We were told that there was nothing to complain of; that what we brought before the House had no significance, or was quite untrue. Then, the facts having multiplied themselves, having been confirmed, having spread about, we were told that individual crimes took place in the Congo as elsewhere, abuses as in Belgium. We were told that these abuses were carefully suppressed, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer added that every time they were brought to the notice of the State they were deferred to the Tribunals, which were extremely severe; but that, however great the severity, it fell short of the ardent desire of the Congo State to suppress such actions. On this point, it is merely necessary to examine the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, in order to find that what was told us was untrue; that the abuses had not been suppressed; that not one abuse in a hundred had been punished; that the impunity assured to their authors was, in the majority of cases, the work of the Congo State itself, owing to the difficulty placed in the path of the Judiciary, and that the abuses continue necessary and frequent, because they are the result of the system of government adopted by the Congo State. This is what we always maintained. What we have always fought is the system of exaggerated exploitation adopted by the Congo State. This fact is now established without possible doubt by the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. It confirms officially everything

which we have already made good in the eyes of every impartial man, and, in the course of the reiterated interpellations which I myself brought forward here with my friend Vandervelde, basing ourselves upon fragmentary information, it is true, but some of which possessed, even then, characteristics of undeniable authenticity, since it referred to the sentences inflicted by the Boma Courts.

One of the things which we have been claiming for several years, and which we have never been able to obtain, is that the Government should hand over a collection of the judgments rendered by the Court at Boma with regard to abuses upon natives, in order that we should ascertain the importance of the abuses, and the manner in which they were suppressed. We know also, from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, that the whole system of impositions established by the Congo State has been declared illegal by the Boma Court, and that for years without end these odious claims and imposts, which have led to so many crimes, have been applied without law, without limitation, in an absolutely arbitrary manner, and that it was only after the Court had drawn attention to the fact, in passing judgment, that the law of forty hours was drawn up, a law which, as the Commission admits, is, moreover, not applied. All this is henceforth incontestable; it is all contained in the report. The impartiality of the Commissioners has been praised; everybody is agreed on that. When Congo affairs are being discussed, it is necessary in every case to give much homage, to begin by rendering homage! (Laughter on the extreme left.) Well, it is with sincerity, and outside all conventionality, that I also render homage to the impartiality and to the conscientiousness of the Commissioners, and also to the extreme prudence which has characterised their conclusions, to the extreme diplomacy of their language. Indeed, it would have been difficult to wrap so many grave facts, so many crying abuses, in more lenient terms. If, notwithstanding all this, the facts pierce through the eulogium of style, if the abuses appear on every page, despite these flowers of rhetoric, it is certainly not because the editors of the story have not taken the trouble to present them in the happiest way possible for the Congo State. We must take account of this when we read the report, and it is perhaps this very fact which increases its gravity. When, notwithstanding all the platonic precautions taken by the editors of the Report, notwithstanding the care which they have always exercised to put things in the least disagreeable way possible for the Congo State, one goes to the rock bottom of things, one is compelled to recognise that the admissions which have been made are of extraordinary gravity, and one cannot say otherwise than that the Report of the Commission of Inquiry is an overwhelming indictment for the Congo State. (The Premier dissents.) It pleases you, sir, to deny once again, notwithstanding the evidence. Very well, since you wish it, since your attitude compels it, we will take, point by point, the admissions of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, at least so far as it is concerned with the matter of supreme importance—the outrageous exploitation of the natives. We will place each point in full light, discussing the text of the Report

itself. We will see, after that, if you can still go on denying. M. Cattier—who is an upholder of colonial policy, a moderate man, and a royalist, who has, therefore, all the qualities necessary to escape suspicion in your eyes—how did M. Cattier proceed, in order to publish his book, which, as you observe, has caused a great impression, and which has been, one may say, a tremendous blow to the Congo State, a blow from which the Congo State is still suffering—he contented himself with taking, one by one, the admissions of the Commission of Inquiry, classifying them, giving them head-lines, adding a few explanations, which give to them the real significance which they possess. And it was then that the Report appeared in the light of a veritable indictment; a formidable act of accusation, whose significance no one has dared to contest; and it has been recognised that this indictment was simply the obvious truth, and our accusations, which are described as systematic exaggerations, and which certain persons dared to call calumnious, pale before those of the Commission of Inquiry.

Gentlemen, if there is one thing with which I have reproached myself sometimes, in respect to my attitude towards the Congo State, and its policy, it is perhaps that I have not done all my duty, that my attitude towards it was characterised, not by too much severity, but by too much indulgence. At one time, indeed, it had become difficult for us in this House, and also in the Press, to refer with any utility at all to Congo affairs, without being immediately accused by the thousand voices of the Press, and by our colleagues themselves, of criticising systematically and passionately, and of desiring, above all, to attack the King. Of course, people took care to abstain from demonstrating what interest I, for instance, could have in attacking the King. Do you think, then, that I am imbued with a personal hatred against the King? Have I ever taken, in any question, an attitude which justifies the attribution to me of malignancy and systematic belittling towards anyone at all? Have I ever agitated for a change in the form of Government which is accepted by the nation? You know, however, that I have never shrunk from putting forward ideas which I thought right, and you should admit that, in this matter of the Congo, I was obeying the voice of my conscience; that I limited myself to certain facts, which are true, which are now proved to have been true, and to which you opposed denials whose falseness is to-day demonstrated. But it is certain that, at a given moment, some years ago, we were, perhaps, wrong not to speak emphatically enough about the Congo. The Congo affairs had become in Belgium what the Dreyfus affair had become in France, and one could no longer speak freely on the subject, without being immediately accused of being an accomplice of the foreigner, without being charged almost of treachery towards Belgium for the benefit of some treasonable syndicate or other, created by Liverpool merchants (laughter on the left). When we asked for an explanation on the subject, and the responsibilities which were being incurred by the Congo State, we were told that the Congo State was a foreign State, from which we had the right to ask nothing, and with which we had nothing to do. But when it was a question of disassociating ourselves from the moral liabilities incurred by this foreign State,

we were accused of being anti-patriotic, of attacking a Belgian work, and being accomplices of the foreigner and Liverpool merchants! It is precisely a repetition of what took place in France during the Dreyfus affair. The systematic and, often enough, not disinterested defenders of the Congo State—we know it to-day, now that there has been revealed to us the working of the Press Bureau of the Congo State—identified, moreover, in order to suit their own case, persons and things that ought not to be identified. It is thus that I have heard stated and repeated that the very honourable Mr. Fox-Bourne, Secretary of the English Aborigines Protection Society, was as honourable as anyone amongst us, that he was exclusively and obviously influenced by humanitarian considerations, and that very great importance should be attached to the charges brought by him. As for Mr. Morel, who has been represented as the Liverpool merchants' man, the licensed calumniator of the Congo State, and whom our jingo Press has treated with the same harshness as was exhibited in France towards the defenders of Captain Dreyfus, the information which I have been able to gather about him, from a large number of prominent colonials, agree in representing him as an extremely honest man, and thoroughly convinced. This information has convinced me that the Secretary of the Congo Reform Association is truly moved by a humanitarian, earnest and elevated idea, guided by the interest of freedom of commerce, and the salvation of the natives, whom he saw handed over to the horrors of forced labour. It is a curious thing, when we hear so much about Liverpool merchants, that the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce should have as its President the Consul for the Congo State, the owner of the steamship company which plies between Belgium and the Congo, and who is a notorious Congophile.* It is no longer possible, to-day, to talk to us about Liverpool merchants.† There can be no longer any question of the charges attributed to them, charges accompanied by the most malignant insinuations. What we have got to face are the admissions of the Commission of Inquiry, appointed by the Congo State, composed of three eminent magistrates appointed by it. What are these admissions? I am not going over the prosecutor's address, which has been made by my friend M. Vandervelde.

M. Vandervelde:—I merely reproduced the passages which are to be found in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry.

M. Lorand:—Certainly, and that was sufficient. You were even very moderate, and I can easily add to those which you have quoted, and which will complete the picture which you have painted. M. Vandervelde exposed, in very moderate terms, but in a very complete and convincing manner, what are the consequences of facts now admitted, and no one has attempted, up to the present, to contest in any way whatsoever that which he said. It is true that M. de Favereau has spoken. He reproduced a certain number of old stereotyped plates, which have already served many times

* The great Sir Alfred Jones, K.C.M.G., the "friend of the African"!

† From first to last, "Liverpool merchants" have had no more to do with the agitation against the Congo atrocities than London, Bristol, or Glasgow merchants. One Liverpool "merchant" has lent generous assistance to the cause of reform—that is what the whole story reduces itself to.

in less critical circumstances, and which he did not consider necessary to change in any way (laughter). M. Woeste, who is an excellent advocate, pleaded with much ardour, and with all the ability which can be placed at the disposal of a bad case. He pleaded on one side (renewed laughter). He told us, for instance, that everything cannot be done in a day; but who has ever said that everything could be done in a day? Who has ever reproached the Congo State with not having done enough in a day? The Congo State has done much. Unfortunately, if it has performed very remarkable things from the military and material point of view, from the point of view of conquest, and the occupation of an immense territory—and we have never denied these things; quite the contrary—it has, on the other hand, introduced and practised a system to which M. Woeste did not refer—an abominable system of outrageous exploitation of the natives (interruption on the right). It seems that this is still denied. Very well, we shall return to it.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER (Premier and Chancellor of the Exchequer):—The Commission of Inquiry in no way condemned the principle of Congo legislation. It has admitted abuses. We disapprove of them, and the Congo State disapproves of them.

M. LORAND:—If you knew that there were any, as you have just said, you would have been better advised to have said so earlier.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—We have never denied individual abuses.

M. LORAND:—There are not only individual abuses; the abuses are the result of the system.

M. MASSON:—These abuses are certain; they are not denied.

M. CLAES:—They are born of excess of zeal.

M. LORAND:—What are these abuses? The Commission of Inquiry is instructed to find out abuses, and it has done so. It has found that they are the outcome of the system. It has endeavoured to plead extenuating circumstances, but it has not even attempted to defend the system. Thus, for instance, on the essential point of freedom of trade, the Commission of Inquiry has found that there was no freedom of trade in the Congo. That is a very grave fact, because it is a negation of the *raison d'être* of the Congo State.* The Congo State was created by the common consent of all the European Powers, to ensure two things—complete freedom of trade in the Congo, and the preservation of the native peoples and the betterment of their lot. This is not contested. Diplomatic subtlety might argue that the recognition of the Congo State was prior to the Congress of Berlin, and that the Congress of Berlin did not create the Congo State. It is none the less true that, if Europe decided to recognise the existence of the Congo State, and decided to place the populations of Central Africa under its care, it was for the purpose of ensuring that the Congo State should preserve these people, should improve their lot, and should establish complete commercial freedom.

* As originally ushered into the world.

M. Huysmans:—If commercial liberty were interpreted as you understand it, there would very soon be no room for Belgium in the Congo.

M. Lorand:—But I have not yet had the opportunity of telling you how I interpret the application of commercial liberty in the Congo (laughter). I admit, however, that it is impossible for me to interpret it as the Congo State has done, because the Congo State has entirely suppressed commercial liberty. The Commission of Inquiry finds, in this regard, that the Congo State has appropriated for itself, or its concessionnaires, all the land in the Congo, that there is no trade possible in that country, and that under these conditions freedom of trade no longer exists, because the elements of trade do not exist, and no one can trade in the Congo unless it be the State and the State's concessionnaires.* As you know, the Congo State has appropriated all the land, with the exception of the huts inhabited by the natives, and the gardens around them.† It itself exploits this land, or concedes it to companies, who alone have the right to exploit it. This system has also been adopted in the French Congo, it is said. Yes, but not in the same proportion, since a tenth of the land appropriated has been reserved to the natives.‡ But this system, which has been introduced into the French Congo by Belgians, came from the Congo State. These principles of spoliation and robbery were suggested, first of all, by a Frenchman interested in Belgian Colonial enterprise, and the forty concessions dragged out of the temporary Minister, by a French Colonial, in favour of so many Companies, were obtained especially to benefit Belgian financiers.§ This was a very clever move. Mr. Morel has pointed out the ridiculous verdicts given by the French Congo Courts, condemning as thieves or poachers the natives who collected rubber in the forests, and the white merchants who bought that rubber from them!‖ These forests, where their ancestors had lived for thousands of years, perhaps, and from which they drew all their means of sustenance, belong henceforth to foreigners inhabiting Paris or Brussels; the natives can no longer collect anything within them, without running the risk of being treated as thieves or poachers!

M. Masson:—Unless they produce titles, duly vised by a notary, establishing their rights of property¶ (laughter on extreme left).

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* Who do not "trade," but who, claiming the elements of trade—that is, the raw produce of the soil in the Congo forests—drive the inhabitants at the point of the bayonet to collect them.

† The contents of which it claims as "food-tax"!

‡ On paper only. The reserves have not been delimited. Nor can they be. The whole talk of "reserves" is dishonest. Why, it would take as long as the duration of the concessions—thirty years—to delimit in any adequate manner an enormous territory, 600,000 square miles in extent, in much of which the white man has never set foot.

§ This is an absolutely true statement of the case, and the French Congo has been reduced to bloody chaos, and French work in Africa besmirched, in the interests of the group of financial harpies who have fattened upon the Congo State, and in the political interests of King Leopold, who has hoped, by these means, to prevent any Anglo-French co-operation, to clear out the cesspool in iniquity which he himself has created on the Congo.

‖ "The British Case in French Congo" (London: Heinemann).

¶ M. Masson here refers to the amazing proposition put forward by M. Woeste. See latter's speech.

M. Lorand:—Yes, the argument which it has been sought to draw from the absence of a title, duly vised by a notary, establishing the natives' rights in the forests, was invoked yesterday by M. Woeste, to justify the acts of the Congo State, which acts the Belgian concessionnaires of French Congo have merely imitated, and in order to maintain that the administration of that State had done the right thing by appropriating, as its private property, four-fifths of the Congo territory! Under these conditions, gentlemen, it is natural that the Commission of Inquiry was obliged to admit that there was no freedom of trade. It is even impossible for a business firm to become established in the territory of the Congo State without obtaining a concession from the latter, or from the monopolist companies. Regions as large as ten or twenty times the size of Belgium do not contain a square inch of territory where any trade can be established, where even a hut can be built, without this special permission from the Congo Government and its Concessionnaire Companies. In view of these facts, those who say that the Act of Berlin has been violated, and that freedom of trade has been confiscated, are speaking the absolute truth, because the Act of Berlin says formally that it is forbidden to confer privileges or monopolies of any kind within the conventional basin of the Congo. In practice, everything is there monopolised by the State and its partners. Even the missionaries are deterred from carrying on their own work. Certainly, gentlemen, I personally do not attach to the religious missions on the Congo the importance given to them by some of our honourable colleagues, either in praise or in blame. The Commission and M. Cattier have pointed out abuses in connection with the schools and chapel farms founded by the missionaries, and some of us would appear to have wished to limit the whole of the Congo question to the secondary issue of the defence or criticism of missionaries, and of the abuses alleged to be connected with them; abuses which appear to me to be very similar to those which have been found in Europe to exist in the convent schools, where children's work is exploited for the benefit of the community. But it must be recognised that these abuses are very small affairs when compared with those of which officials of the State and of the Companies have been convicted, and that the missionaries have at least this to their credit, that their object is a religious object, and that they are not influenced by egotistical sentiments, and that, if they sacrifice themselves for a work, which personally I do not admire, but which at least is a disinterested and altruistic work, one must recognise their devotion, their abnegation, their altruism; and if any White men on the Congo at all are entitled to credit, it is those men.

M. Janson:—You must not, however, forget the explorers.

M. Lorand:—True, the explorers, those animated by the love of science, certainly deserve the most legitimate of all homage, but such explorers are rare, especially on the Congo. There are a very small number of them, and almost all the officers who have been sent to the Congo were sent there to carry on war against the natives, to become merchants and imposers of taxes, interested by bonuses to increase, at all prices, the amount of taxation,

I was explaining that land is monopolised to such an extent on the Congo, that only recently I was reading that missionaries have sought in vain for a lease of land upon which to found their missions, and that those who live there live often in strict dependence upon the State, which can deprive them of everything when it pleases. The appropriation of the land by the State is so complete that one can barely place foot upon the soil of the Colony without receiving the special permission of the Congo State. And this is what has become of commercial liberty. An attempt has been made to justify such an argument by the theory of State ownership in land, which from the point of view of law I consider to be a monstrous jest.

What! In order to justify this appropriation, without any precedent in history, learned juridical compositions are brought before us, emanating from eminent jurisconsults, arguing that, because we have a civil code in which it is stated that vacant lands belong to the State, that therefore the whole of the land, the whole of the forests, everything which constitutes the Congo territory, known or unknown, must belong to the State as private property, or can be exploited in the way which is known! That is, I repeat, a sorrowful caricature of law, whose formulas have been placed at the service of the most brutal robbery.* It is a ridiculous abuse of the similitude of words, to characterise totally different things, and the application of principles in circumstances for which they were not created. Vacant lands in the Congo as in Belgium, when on the Congo, in view of our appropriation, everything is vacant! The gamekeepers of this property are the native sentries, of whom the Commission of Inquiry drew that picture reproduced by my friend, Vandervelde, and which is still, no doubt, in your minds; these sanguinary brigands, stationed in all the villages, and instructed to watch the rubber output, hundreds of whom are killed every year in revenge for abuses, exactions and crime of all kinds which they commit! It is the Commission of Inquiry itself which, notwithstanding all its goodwill, was compelled to recognise the exactions committed by the black sentries, to the detriment of the native peoples, and which found the reprisals of the latter so natural that it considered the statistics of the murders of the sentries as the barometer of the atrocity of the *régime* to which the natives are subjected! And this abuse of forced labour, the source of all the evil—has it not also been said that forced labour is no different from the impost which exists amongst us? Taxation on the Congo is due to the governing power, as in Belgium, it is argued. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, forgetting all the bases of our public law, actually told the House that the consent of the taxpayer had not to be asked. Did not M. de Smet de Naeyer come to us one day, and say: "But if in Belgium you asked the assent of the taxpayer, in order to obtain a tax, the Belgian taxpayer would not pay his tax either," and the Minister even added this atrocious sentence, which will, unhappily, remain attached to his name for ever: "As to the natives, they are entitled to nothing."

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* Precisely—*Summum jus summa injuria!*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Have I then also atrocities to my debit? You are travestying my words. I said that the taxpayer who pays a tax has no right to claim the countervalue of that tax. This is the case, strictly speaking, with the taxation in kind, or labour tax. I added that, notwithstanding this, the work was paid for.

M. LORAND:—Certainly. If atrocities have become the rule on the Congo, it is thanks to all your complacency. As I shall show presently, it is thanks to your complacency that these abuses can still be committed on the Congo, and if the system continues, it will be your fault.*

M. ANSEELE:—He is proud of it, the unfortunate man!

M. LORAND:—The natives were entitled to nothing, you said. For them, therefore, there are no rights. I have said, and I maintain, that that is an atrocious sentence. **And a man has been found to make of that sentence a system.‡** The Minister for Justice came here and told us that the Belgian Magistrate who had been at the head of the Press Bureau, revealed by M. Cattier, had not distributed the secret funds mentioned last week. That is understood, and, really, it is not unfortunate. But here we find a magistrate and Professor at the Free University of Brussels, who publishes, in a review of that University, an article denying to the natives, rights common to man!† That they have not the rights of citizens we know, seeing that there are no citizens in the Congo, seeing that the natives are the subjects of a limitless absolutism, slaves of a system of human exploitation such as has been seen nowhere. But the native has the rights of a man; he has the right to live, the right of personal security, the right of personal property, the right to the produce of his labour, the right of coming and going, and we know that, in the majority of cases, even that right is denied to the native. We have allowed the Congo and the pernicious influence which the Congo has exercised on the minds of a portion of our countrymen, to reach the stage of denying to our black brothers—those brothers whom you gentlemen desire to

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* This is demonstrably true. If the Belgian Government, which for more than ten years has been presided over by M. de Smet de Naeyer, had shown even a modicum of courage in dealing with the Sovereign of the Congo State, and had included fewer sycophants and place-hunters, the Congo State would have been compelled to place its house in order, and tens of thousands of human lives would have been saved. If Belgium takes over the Congo, she will take over a grisly heritage. It is impossible that a crime of so colossal a nature, and affecting such an enormous number of human beings, can escape a certain nemesis. That nemesis no doubt will be felt by all the Powers who have possessions in Tropical Africa, and indirectly by the whole world, but especially by Belgium. If fate decrees that Belgium inherits the evil crops which King Leopold has sown, then future generations of Belgians will have just cause to hold the memory of M. de Smet de Naeyer in bitter execration. That the sun will rise in the heavens to-morrow is not more certain than this.

‡ This is, perhaps, the most notable utterance in the course of the whole debate; one which strikes at the very root of the Congo evil, and shows the extraordinary iniquity of the whole conception in the clearest manner.

† This infamous article appears in the issue of the *Brussels University Review* for December last. The name of the author is M. Rolin, the individual who was at the head of the Press Bureau!

Christianise; men who, it is true, have not our culture, but who are, for all that, men like us—those elementary rights of humanity, which we must on the contrary claim for every human being.

M. BEERNAERT:—It is abominable!

M. LORAND:—And then, on the pretext that in certain Belgian provinces the *corvée* still exists (it exists in the provinces of Liège and Namur), involving two days' work *per annum*, and those who own a horse, for instance, one day's work of that horse, to keep the roads in repair, we have been told that the same thing was demanded of the Congo natives—that they were only asked to pay a tax in kind, or in labour, because they had not cash to bring to the receiver of taxes, and that it was justifiable to ask them for a "little" work, by means of the *corvée*, in exchange for all the benefits of civilisation conferred upon them! And this *corvée* of the natives has led to a system which M. Janson has just said, in an interruption,* is a disgrace to our country. For our country, I repeat, because it is we who tolerate it.

M. JANSON:—We should clear ourselves from this responsibility (applause on the extreme left).

M. LORAND:—Undoubtedly.

M. JANSON:—Let the disgrace remain on those who have committed or tolerated the acts which the Commission condemns (renewed applause on the same benches). Belgium cannot assume this shame, and take it upon herself. That is our interpretation of patriotism.

M. LORAND:—The tax in kind, and forced labour tax, which have been the means used to develop the colossal properties which the State has attributed to itself, or has attributed to Concessionnaire Companies, has produced appalling results. This is admitted by the Commission of Inquiry itself. For long enough this tax was imposed arbitrarily, without regulation, without law, without limitation, according to the pleasure of those whose business it was to impose it. The natives were, and this is the literal fact, taxable indefinitely.§ We pointed this out on several occasions, Vandervelde and myself, in the interpellations which we made on the subject. The agents invested with these illegal and arbitrary powers, even from the point of view of Congo law, as defined by the verdicts of the Boma Courts, received a bonus proportionate with the tax they could wring from the native! The State denied that! Explanations were demanded by Germany.† The State openly lied to Germany in declaring that no sort of reward proportionate to the quantity of taxation imposed was granted to its agents. The truth was the exact contrary!‡ Vandervelde has described the altera-

* Not reported.

§ They are still . . . except on paper.

† In 1895.

‡ See the correspondence between Count Alvensleben, German Minister in Brussels, and M. Van Eetvelde, Congo Secretary of State, printed in full in one of the earlier whitewashing books published in the Congo State interests, "The Congo State," by D. C. Boulger.

tions which were made subsequently in the form of bonuses. It was, first of all, a direct bonus, then an indirect bonus, which became in time a pension, but a pension which the State is not compelled to pay to its agents, and which is proportionate to the output of their respective districts. The State also adopted at one time a system of good-conduct marks. I was able, by a *dossier* which was confided to me, to show that these so-called good-conduct marks were represented by a sum of money, and that this sum of money was proportionate to the quantity of rubber which officials forced from the natives placed under them. It was still, and always a bonus, which had been dissimulated in order to be able to lyingly inform Germany that it no longer existed. Such a system was bound to bring about the most frightful abuses. It is self-evident that, without law, without possible control, so to speak, over such vast territories, in view of the obvious intentions of those who had organised and directed the system, the power placed in the hands of officials could not help degenerating into abuses of all kinds. These officials live alone amongst savages, subject to a bad climate, to the effects of isolation, to the effects of absolute power over these primitive peoples, to the effects of continual contact with them, and to the effects of diseases; they suffer from the dangers which threaten them every day, and, ceaselessly badgered and themselves interested to make their districts produce as much rubber as possible, they were bound to devote themselves to this task by every means. Abuses could not fail to take place, and the result of the bonuses was to lead to oppression, and to a frantic exploitation of the natives, to atrocities, and to the crimes which have been disclosed.*

M. Claes:—It could not have been otherwise.

M. Lorand:—These facts are admitted by the Commission of Inquiry. In face of the declaration as to the illegality of the system by the Congo Tribunals, themselves, and perhaps also in face of the revelations which were made in this House, a law was finally decreed. It was a law prescribing a labour tax of forty hours per month, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (M. de Smet de Naeyer) saw fit to assert that to impose forty hours labour per month upon the natives is not excessive. It is, however, fairly severe. I do not think that these natives can work more than eight hours per day; if they do so, they do well. Forty hours, therefore, would represent five working days, and that would be more than sufficient to accustom them to work.† But is that all which is imposed upon them? The Commission found that the law of forty hours is everywhere and always violated.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—We disapprove of these violations.

M. Janson:—That is fortunate!

M. Lorand:—At last! Very well, then, go and ask the Congo State to suppress the general abuses admitted by the Commission,

* And which continue.

† Or sixty days per annum; but the idea which this law seeks to inculcate for European consumption is, literally, forty hours per month, or twenty days *per annum*.

and tell the Congo State that if it will not do so, it will no longer receive any support from Belgium (loud applause on the extreme left and on the left).

M. JANSON:—There is the question!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—The Congo State disapproves and suppresses the abuses.†

M. LORAND:—Tell the Congo State that it will no longer have our officers, no longer have our officials, will no longer receive anything from us, if these abuses are not immediately suppressed (renewed applause on the extreme left). Such should be the closing act to the Report made by the envoys of the Congo State itself! Ah! The Minister disapproves of these abuses! Very well, then, what does the Minister think of the following extract from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry?

"In the majority of cases, the native must every fortnight journey two days' march, and sometimes further, in order to reach that part of the forest where he can find, in fair abundance, rubber vines. There the collector lives for a certain number of days a miserable existence."

It is the Commission of Inquiry, notwithstanding the palliation of its language, which admits that!

"The native lives a miserable existence," and I think, Sir, that the taxes, even the *corvées*, imposed upon Belgian taxpayers, do not condemn them to live a miserable existence, even for a single day (laughter). The Commission describes this existence to us:—

"The native is compelled to build himself an improvised shelter, which cannot, evidently, replace his hut. He has not the food to which he is accustomed; he is deprived of his wife, exposed to the climate, and to the attacks of wild beasts. His produce he must bring to the State Posts, or to the Post of the Company, and it is only then that he can return to his village, where he can only remain two or three days before the new demand is upon him."

Such is the result of the law of forty hours! The native has only two or three days a month of respite to be with his wife and children, to delve in his garden, to inhabit his hut, and then once more he must brave the dangers of the forest, in order to bring rubber for *Bula Matadi*, the Congo State.‡ Is it not abominable? And the Commission of Inquiry admits it. You disapprove. I am happy to hear it. You cannot fail to disapprove. But, then, square your actions with your wishes, and see that this stops for good and all, not with patchwork and mitigation, under the pretext that the Congo State lacks resources, when it does not lack resources to construct in Belgium palaces and arcades, or to buy royal domains (applause on the extreme left). The Commission of Inquiry, moreover, concludes on this point as follows:—

"The result of this is that, whatever may be his activity in the rubber forest, the native, owing to the journeys he has to take, sees the majority of his time absorbed by the collection of rubber. It is hardly necessary to point out that this situation constitutes a flagrant violation of the forty hours law."

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† It approves, and it does not suppress. If it disapproved and suppressed; if the law were carried out, the yearly output of rubber would fall from 5,000 tons to 500 tons.

‡ Father Vermeersch gives, in his recent book, an instance reported by a magistrate in 1904, "who found, near Lukafu, on the Kambove road, natives whom the tax of forty hours had retained, *for thirteen months*, far from their homes."

The Commission itself admits that the essential law for the preservation of the natives is violated in the most flagrant way, and it is said that the findings of the Commission of Inquiry are not overwhelmingly condemnatory of the system of exploitation adopted by the Congo State! And we are told of an abominable campaign of calumnies, with which we are associated! What else have we ever said?* We have said that the natives have been expropriated from their right to their own soil, because they had not got titles to produce, and that, after having expropriated them from their land, they themselves had been robbed of their time, of their liberty, of their family life, of all social advantages, to compel them to work rubber in the forests, in the midst of dangers and privations, subjected to abominations of which I have given you some idea, and all this in the interest of aliens, who have taken their country by force, and have brought them nothing in exchange! For, in the Congo State "budgets," there are many items for the Army, for the *Force Publique*, for public work of a defensive or offensive character, to extend the possessions of the State; but there is very little to be seen inscribed for the improvement of the lot of the natives, and M. Cattier has been able to say that the natives have been given nothing, that our civilisation has not given them the least advantage in exchange for the crimes, the misery, and the wretchedness of the rubber tax! The proof of this lies in the depopulation of the Congo.†

The Congo State was created with a humanitarian and civilising object. Now, even in places where the State has been able to exercise in the completest manner its civilising action, that is to say, the Lower and Middle Congo, there is frightful depopulation. The Commission of Inquiry makes no bones about it. "It is certain," it says, "that a large portion of the population must have disappeared" on account of the privations, on account of the diseases which usually accompany the advent of Europeans among primitive peoples; the population has disappeared, carried off by diseases to which the natives offer but little resistance, on account of the new life they lead; this life of forced labour, violent, fearful, a life of constant trouble, privation, dangers, unhappiness and misery, in which garb our civilisation has manifested itself to them, and which prevents them from offering any resistance to sleeping sickness, smallpox, and other diseases, which Europeans bring with them everywhere, and which are, unfortunately, more destructive for these peoples than they are in Europe. This has happened more or less everywhere, you will tell me. It is true, almost everywhere the first effect of colonial policy has been to make a desert where it wished to civilise; but I do not think that this curse, which seems attached to it, has ever manifested itself in so terrible and so rapid a manner as in the Congo State.‡ It is true that nowhere but in the Congo has the exploitation of the natives by whites been carried to such lengths. There are also other forms of the tax in kind. The rubber tax exceeds them all by its import-

* What else have the British reformers ever said?

† And in the impoverishment of the survivors.

‡ The French Congo is running it close.

ance, and the evils which it produces. Almost the entire revenue of the Congo is based on rubber, which is shown in the Budget at 16,000,000 francs per annum.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Ivory, rubber, and copal represent from 93 per cent. to 95 per cent. of the exports.

M. LORAND:—They represent three-fourths of the trade, and more than half the revenue. M. Cattier has shown in his book that this rubber tax is extraordinarily higher on the Congo than anywhere else. We have always been told, indeed, about what was taking place in other colonies, and what we have been told was not altogether to the honour of colonial policy. It has been said that elsewhere there are abuses, and this is not to be doubted. But elsewhere the abuses are generally individual abuses; elsewhere people protest against these abuses. In England, Germany and France, the Houses of Parliament are called upon to discuss the claims of those who protest against the abuses committed in the Colonies. There is a Parliamentary control, which is exercised over the Colonies. We saw this again in France last week. The system which you have adopted for the Congo is such that only in this country is there no control. The amount of the taxes enforced in the Congo upon the natives is also without any possible comparison with that applied in other colonies. According to M. Cattier, the amounts represent in the Congo 53 per cent.* of the revenue, as against 15 per cent. in one of the neighbouring German colonies . . . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—That is a *maximum!*

M. LORAND:— . . . and two per cent. or three per cent. only in the other neighbouring colonial possessions of the Congo.† Nowhere has the system of exploitation of the native attained the proportion which it has attained on the Congo.‡ And it is not only Red Rubber, as it has been rightly called, which thus compels a million of men to forced labour in perpetuity—for such is the significance which the introduction of our civilisation has had for them, such have been the benefits they have drawn from it—there is also the *corvée* in food-stuffs, whose odious character M. Cattier has shown. The natives are obliged to bring these food-stuffs to

* The proportion is, of course, infinitely higher than 53 per cent., for the simple reason that the published estimates of revenue and expenditure, which are all that the Congo State issues, do not include the revenues abstracted from the total revenues by King Leopold. The proportion is more like 75 to 80 per cent.

† It is a very curious thing that neither M. Cattier, in his book, nor any of the members who took part in this discussion, appear to be acquainted with the fact that in *none* of the West African possessions of Great Britain is there a direct tax upon the people, except in Sierra Leone, where such direct tax amounts to five shillings *per better-class hut per annum*, and yields about £30,000, in a total revenue of £300,000.

‡ For the simple reason that, with all their defects of detail, the policy of the Powers in Tropical Africa (excepting the Congo Basin) is a policy which aims at increasing the purchasing capacity of the African native, and consequently his prosperity—not necessarily for motives of altruism, but because such policy is the only rational object in founding tropical dependencies, of which the main idea is to create for home industries a market, such a market being only possible if the native is in a position to purchase from it—whereas in the Congo State, and to a large extent now in the French Congo, the policy pursued is a policy of force for the benefit of individuals, to the detriment of the native, and to the detriment of national interests.

the camps to feed the black and white *personnel*, the soldiers and their families, although we had been led to believe in official publications that each camp was surrounded with vast plantations of food-stuffs, which were being continually developed, and which would serve to victual the camp. It seems that this was not true either, and that it is the unfortunate natives who must bring in their food-stuffs to the camp, and that the whole population is affected up to distances of seventy and eighty kilometres! And under what conditions? It is precisely, as M. Cattier points out, as though the taxpayers of Bruges and Waremme—assuming that in our country there were neither roads, railways nor plantations, and that Belgium was still in a sixth-century condition—were compelled to bring in, three times per month, five loaves each to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Brussels (laughter on the extreme left). Add to this the frightful porterage system which is imposed on the natives, and the abuses and consequences of which have just been denounced in the French House—this porterage has completely depopulated certain regions, and the Commission of Inquiry, notwithstanding the excessive prudence with which it produces its conclusions, demands an immediate solution of this *régime*, without, however, daring to ask for its total suppression.* Note also the recruiting for the army and public works. You have been shown how it has been carried out on a system of bonuses, calculated like the price of cattle, according to the size and the age of the recruits, who were, moreover, marched in chains furnished by the State.† But I prefer to confine myself to the great fundamental iniquity from which all the abominations and the horrors spring, and at the same time all the resources of the State—the rubber tax. Let us pass in review the means of coercion employed to compel the native to furnish the tax. It is to ensure its payment that these brigands, who are called Sentries, are sent out to different villages, to compel the natives to furnish the requisite quantity of rubber. These sentries are themselves accompanied by a band of other rascals, who rob the natives, not only of their wives, but of all they possess, and live on rapine, exactions and pillage. These black sentries and their bands of scoundrels in this way place the unfortunate natives under the heel of an abominable tyranny, and the natives are driven to assassination as the only solution, and I repeat that the Commission of Inquiry was compelled to recognise that the number of murders committed, owing to the oppression of the sentries, can alone give an idea of the mass of crimes of which the sentries have been guilty.

M. Vandervelde:—We ought to be unanimous, without distinction of Party, to condemn such a system.

M. G. Terwangne (Catholic):—Who says that is not the case?

M. Lorand:—So much the better. Allow me, my dear colleague, to congratulate you upon your interruption; this is the second interruption which redounds to the honour of our colleagues

* So long as King Leopold is squandering millions in building forts on the Eastern frontier, filling the Lado Enclave with troops and war material, and occupying British territory, the ravages of the porterage system will continue.

† See M. Vandervelde's speech, first day's debate.

on the right. After our honourable colleague, M. Beernaert, who said just now, with regard to so complete a negation of the rights of man, "It is abominable," here is another of the members of the majority who, when my friend Vandervelde asked that the Chamber should be unanimous in condemning such a system, interrupts to say, "Who asserts that this is not so?"

M. VANDERVELDE:—We shall see when the Resolution comes to be voted.

M. LORAND:—These sentiments redound to the honour of Belgium, gentlemen, but we shall see presently if you will endorse your words by acts. (M. Woeste is seen to approach M. G. Terwangne.) Cries from the extreme left "'Ware wolf! 'ware wolf!" Laughter on the left and on the extreme left—uproar.)

M. LORAND:—It seems that the interruption of the Hon. M. Terwangne is somewhat distasteful to some of our honourable colleagues on the right, and I suppose at the present moment he is being made to understand that he must not commit any imprudence (protest on the right).

M. G. TERWANGNE:—But nobody in the world would approve of the facts which you have just quoted (interruption on the extreme left—uproar).

M. LORAND:—It is not only a question of disapproving of them, it is a question of ending them. Certainly you do not approve of them. You cannot but disapprove of them. But if you disapprove of them in the manner in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer disapproves of them, and if you do not back your feelings by your actions, I have the right to say that your disapproval is merely platonic, and that you will participate with the Government in responsibility for their continuance.

But, gentlemen, there is something more horrible still in the enforcement of this system of coercion, which some have dared to compare, by abusing the similitude of words, with the procedure which exists in Belgium to recover taxes. The Minister has reminded us that when a taxpayer does not pay his tax, he is coerced, and that the same thing might be done on the Congo. But what does coercion consist of in the Congo? It is, first of all, the presence of the sentry, who robs, violates, pillages, murders, and who often ends by being murdered himself; and when, despite all this, the quantity of rubber arbitrarily fixed is not brought in, further steps are taken, in the shape of what are called punitive expeditions. A punitive expedition has already been described, and I should not return to it if I did not wish to emphasise the deplorable effect which such duties must exercise upon the officers of our army, who are called upon to direct these expeditions. You can judge from what I am going to read you, from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, if M. Cattier was wrong in referring to this aspect of the question. The Report admits "the abusive employment of military expeditions of a war-like character":—

"Often," it says, "the written order handed to the Commander of the expedition simply told him to recall the natives to a sense of duty."

Another Congolese euphemism, but the Commission notes that—

"The vagueness and the lack of precision of such instructions, and, in certain cases, the thoughtlessness of those who were instructed to execute them, have frequently had the result of slaughters which were not justified."

M. JANSON:—It is, therefore, the penalty of death which is exacted.

M. LORAND:—It is more than the penalty of death; it is pillage, massacre, and incendiarism, carried into the four corners of the territory.

M. VANDERVELDE:—The Commission adds that these punitive expeditions fall upon the innocent as well as the guilty.

M. LORAND:—Precisely. Here is the passage in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. You will see if I am exaggerating. It is concerned with punitive expeditions against villages which have not delivered a sufficiency of rubber, and whose inhabitants have fled to the bush. First of all, the women are tied up. This is another Congolese expression, which I point out to you. "Tied up;" the *capitas* tie up the women. These are curious methods, and, as for the women, sometimes it is forgotten to untie them, and they are allowed to die of hunger, as happened in the case of the 58 women of Banghi,* in the Upper Congo, and as happened in the Mongalla case—a very great number of women. As we said in a previous interpellation, the natives whose wives have been tied up flee. They are pursued by a black patrol, "often not commanded by a white man, according to the regulations," and then says the Commission:—

"The black soldier, left to himself, falls back upon the sanguinary instincts which the severest discipline has difficulty in suppressing. It is in the course of such patrols that the greater number of murders, of which the soldiers of the State are accused, have occurred."

And now, here is how the Report of the Commission of Inquiry characterises a punitive expedition:—

"The order confided to the Commandant of the detachment was then drawn up in the following general way: 'N—— is instructed to punish such and such a village.'"

In the Congo the communal property of the native is not respected, but collective punishments are applied (laughter on the extreme left). I continue my perusal of the Report:—

"The Commission is aware of many expeditions of this type; the consequences have often been very destructive, and we must not be astonished if, in the course of the delicate operations, whose object it is to take hostages,† and intimidate the natives, a perpetual control cannot always be exercised to prevent the sanguinary instincts of the natives"—of the natives in the service of the Congo State, note this well—"from giving themselves free scope. When the order to punish comes from a superior authority, it is very difficult that the expedition should not degenerate into massacres, accompanied by pillage and incendiarism."

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* French Congo.

† "Delicate operations, whose object it is to take hostages!" When such "delicate operations" are conducted by natives against natives, they are called slave-raids, and Public Opinion holds up its hands in horror. The power of mere words is so very great!

The text of the Report itself finds that it is very difficult that the manner in which taxes are recovered should not lead to pillage and incendiarism.

"Military action," continues the Report, "thus understood, always exceeds the object in view, punishment being in flagrant disproportion to the sin committed. The innocent and the guilty are confounded in the same punishment."

Did we exaggerate? But the commission thinks it advisable to invoke extenuating circumstances for these Belgian officers, who, under the pretext of civilisation, are thus employed in spreading massacre, pillage, and incendiarism in the Congo territories. I will read you this passage also, as it is right to do so, but I will then ask you if other responsibilities are not terribly involved: —

"The responsibility for these abuses," says the Commission, "must not fall entirely upon the Commanders of military expeditions. Note must be taken in examining these facts of the deplorable confusion which exists still in the Upper Congo, between a state of war and a state of peace, between administration and repression, between those who may be considered as enemies, and those who ought to be considered as citizens of the State, and treated according to its laws. The Commission was struck with the general tone of the reports relating to the operations referred to. Often, while stating that the expedition was solely brought about by arrears in taxation, and without even making any sort of mention of attack or resistance on the part of the natives, which would alone justify the use of arms, the authors of these reports speak of 'villages surprised,' 'energetic pursuit,' 'numerous enemies killed and wounded,' 'plunder,' 'prisoners of war,' 'terms of peace.' Obviously, these officers thought they were at war, acted as though they were at war, and that, indeed, is what their superiors intended."

It is there that the responsibility lies!

"In handing these reports to the supreme authority, what, in a general way, are the annotations inscribed on them by the District Commissioners? Among advice, or criticism, or technical military observations, blame or praise with regard to the incidents of the campaign, very rarely do they consider whether the use of arms was justified. Under such circumstances, we should be inclined to excuse subalterns who have not thoroughly understood the pacific character of their mission."

If extenuating circumstances can be pleaded for the subalterns, how infinitely graver becomes the responsibility of their superiors!*

"This position of affairs cannot be prolonged in the interest of the people, and in the interests of the officials of the State. The natives must not be exposed to being treated as enemies outside the law, and, on the other hand, measures must be taken so that officers who are conducting what may be accurately termed warlike operations, should not be liable to be hauled before the courts to explain these operations, as though it were a matter of an offence against the common law."

There are Courts of Justice on the Congo, although the organisation of justice is deplorable, and but too often interfered with by the administrative authority. The Report of the Commission admits this, and if, Sir (addressing the Premier), you had really desired to put an end to these abuses, it would merely have been necessary to ascertain the contents of the verdicts rendered by the Boma Tribunals, in which those who are prosecuted for violence towards the natives constantly give as an excuse, or as extenuating circumstances, the orders which they received from their superiors. This alone ought to have been sufficient to make you take action, and

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* Yet such punishments as have been inflicted have always fallen upon the subalterns, never upon the superiors.

these verdicts alone exclude all idea of good faith, and every plea of ignorance on the part of the Congo Government.*

Instructions to officials are, indeed of two kinds, as was said the other day in the French House. Instructions No. 1 are drawn up for European consumption, full of beautiful humanitarian phrases, and suggestions of kindness and gentleness. Then there are orders No. 2, which are not meant for publication, but which tell officials plainly what notice they need take, in practice, of the humanitarian instructions drafted to humbug European opinion . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—Notably the circular of M. Wahis, as regards hostages.

M. LORAND:—Precisely, and the circulars of the A.B.I.R., reproduced recently in the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*,‡ on which were inscribed the number of women taken from their homes, whom a sentry might detain, and the way in which coercion and the taking of hostages should be exercised, and the manner in which feeding hostages should be inscribed in the books, "in order that the monthly statement should give the administrators an exact idea of the general operations of the Society" (sensation). All these circulars exist.† Those of the A.B.I.R. were recently published by M. Pierre Mille, in the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, and personally I have received confirmation of them recently in a report which I hold. But amongst the documents which have come into my possession are others which are worth communicating to the House, because they give a good idea of the daily proceedings of the Congo authorities. Here, for instance, are two memorandums, written in pencil by officials of the Congo State:—

"Ndumby is authorised to go to Lakondue, to fetch a woman and a girl belonging to him, and who have taken refuge there." Lusbo, 10th April, 1901. The Lieutenant (signed "Chenot") (outcry).

"Klomoni is instructed to go to Lakondue to fetch two women, Galula and Makassi Moiqui, who belong to the interpreter Sebastian." The Commissioner (signed Pimpurniaux). (Renewed outcry.)

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* This is a point of capital importance, which provides the clearest indication of the fore-knowledge of the Congo authorities, and determines their degree of culpability. The official records of the Congo Government examined by the Commissioners proved that the existence of atrocities, the prevalence of gross oppression, of crushing taxation, of the taking of hostages to stimulate the production of increased quantities of rubber, the sentry system, the chain-gang, flogging, repeated massacres—that all these things were known to the Congo State authorities, and that they had been perpetrated by agents, white and black, of the Congo Government. To the Congo State authorities, indeed, the Report of its own Commission contained nothing new, and every wheel and rivet of the rubber-producing machine of the Congo is controlled from Brussels. In view of the Commission's explicit declaration that it was in the official records themselves that they found "elements of appreciation which contributed to a far greater degree to form its conclusions than many depositions," the contention that the Report came as a revelation to the Congo State authorities, is wholly untenable. What produced something like a panic in the offices in Brussels was the knowledge that the Commissioners were, if timorous, honest. *That* was the revelation!!

‡ First published in the *West African Mail*, then in "Red Rubber" (J. Richardson & Sons, Liverpool), and finally made accessible to the French Public by M. Pierre Mille and Mr. Morel in "Le Congo Leopoldien" *(Cahier de la Quinzaine*, Paris).

† In my possession, for the most part.

Here is another document, which is still more edifying. I shall be told, perhaps, that it is concerned with the preservation of the forests, and of measures to be taken to prevent their destruction! As you know, it is forbidden to cut the rubber vines.* This practice must be prevented, and we are now about to see the method adopted to do so. Here is the photograph of a document, of which the original is in the hands of a person whom I know, and in whom we can have every confidence.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Who wrote the document?

M. LORAND:—It is signed by an official of the State, a District Commissioner, whom I know personally; who, moreover, is very well known, whose handwriting is known to me, and to colleagues to whom I have shown this document, and who, like myself, are perfectly convinced of its authenticity. It reads as follows:—

"M. le Chef de Poste,

"Decidedly these people of Inoryo are a bad lot. They have just been and cut some rubber vines at Huli. We must fight them until their absolute submission has been obtained, or their complete extinction. Warn for the last time the people of Inoryo, and put into execution as soon as possible your project of accompanying them to the forest or else go to the village with a good trique.† When you arrive at the first hut, speak as follows to the owner thereof: 'Here is a basket; you are to fill it with rubber. Go to the forest at once, and if in a week you have not returned with 10lbs. of rubber, I shall set fire to your hut, and you will burn.' The trique may be used to drive into the forest those who refuse to leave the village. By burning one hut after another I think you will not be compelled to proceed to last extremities before being obeyed. Inform the natives that if they cut another single vine, I will exterminate them to the last man."

(Sensation—outcry on extreme left.)

You see it is clear, it is precise; we know where we are.

M. HOYOIS:—Who signed it?

M. LORAND:—Since you compel me to tell you, the signatory is Commandant Jacques, the well-known "Anti-Slavery leader"!

M. ANSEELE:—It is the King, indirectly.

M. LORAND:—Such are the threats which he instructed his subordinate to make known to the natives, to compel them to "make rubber." Were they carried out? I do not care to inquire into it at this moment. I merely ask you to realise the mental condition of a *Chef de Poste* who receives such orders from his chief, the District Commissioner, from the representative of the

* On paper.

† A *trique* is a flat wooden mallet, which is used to thrash the natives in some parts of the Congo, in preference to the *chicotte*, a whip made of hippopotamus hide.

Government. What attention can he pay, under such circumstances, to humanitarian regulations and circulars? I am not seeking now to prove whether specific atrocities were committed under these particular instructions; but I say that, when officials receive such letters, it is obviously impossible that they should give any consideration to humanitarian instructions published in the official Bulletins which M. Woeste brandished triumphantly before this House, and the ceaseless panegyrics of which are circulated in Belgium! What does this District Commissioner say in effect? The natives must bring in five kilos. of rubber every week—note the amount—or else hunt, strike, set fire, exterminate.

Gentlemen, this is the system which has been prevalent hitherto, which will continue to be applied, because no remedy will be brought until the State is compelled.† Then, in comparison with the overwhelming testimony furnished by the Commission of Inquiry, the reform proposals are so vague and insufficient, would take so long to carry out; such care is taken of the financial situation of the Congo State, that one feels that, if the State does anything, it will do very little; and if the Congo State appointed a Commission of Reforms immediately after the return of the Commission of Inquiry, we must ask ourselves if this was not done in order to still further delay the moment when it will have to bring about reforms.* Purposes of delay are but too often served by a Commission, and, as M. Vandervelde said, **this Commission of Reforms has been constituted in such a manner that we can have no kind of confidence in its results.** We see amongst the members appointed some of the high officials of the Congo State, who could not have been ignorant of the facts which have taken place, and for which they are responsible. We see, I think, among them also, one of the signatories of the instructions which I have just read. We see among them the administrators of certain Concessionnaire Societies, and notably an administrator of the A.B.I.R. To cut a long story short, apart from two or three Belgian magistrates, who have no special competence in colonial affairs, the Commission does not contain a single person able to represent the protest of outraged humanity, and of the rights of man, which have been stamped upon. I must, however, admit that one of our colleagues is on this Commission, and that he is one of the few members of the Commission to whose independence one can testify without reserve. But I do not think that he has any special competence in colonial affairs, that he has studied in any special way this question, nor that he has played any important part in this Commission, on which he seems to have been appointed with the main idea of giving some appearance of satisfaction to the missionaries, who were carefully excluded therefrom.

That which involves the responsibility of all of us and the responsibility of the Government is the excuse put forward in order to prevent the radical reform of such a system, or only

† Precisely. The "State" exists for pelf. Reform means loss. Hence no reform, except on paper. I repeat that, even if the reforms recommended by the Commission were applied, the yearly output of rubber would fall from 5,000 to 500 tons.

* Just so. Had the Congo State been sincere, action—prompt, striking, thorough—would have been taken immediately the Report of the Commission was received.

to begin to reform it in the distant future, *e.g.*, that the Congo State is lacking in resources, when on the contrary its revenues are disgorged into the Domaine de la Couronne, whose mechanism the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself disclosed to us, revenues utilised in sumptuous works in Belgium, which the Belgian Parliament has declined to sanction. Take, for instance, the Arcade of the *Cinquantenaire*,* which was constructed at a very heavy cost, and with extraordinary rapidity, thanks to the intervention of generous donors, who gave nothing, and who were merely utilised as screens to conceal the sovereign dispenser of the revenues of the *Domaine de la Couronne.* And this, be it noted, is a purely sumptuous monument,† for which Parliament had absolutely declined to vote any subsidy. From all this we come to the result pointed out by M. Cattier, that by indirect means the King of the Belgians, being at the same time Sovereign absolute of the Congo State, can cause public works to be constructed in this country, outside the consent of the House and the control of Parliament.

M. Bertrand:—Nevertheless, Belgium will have to pay all the same!

M. Lorand:—It has since been shown—M. Bertrand had demonstrated it, and I do not think his demonstration can be shaken—that not only does the Domaine, which exploits a fourth of the rubber region of the Congo, acquire in Belgium all this real estate, hotels, palaces, land, houses, purchases millions of francs worth of real estate from the King of the Belgians—a transaction which is quite incomprehensible (because one asks one's self in vain what may be the significance of the transaction which sells real estate belonging to the King of the Belgians to the *Domaine de la Couronne* of the Congo State)—that not only are the revenues of the *Domaine de la Couronne* drawn for this purpose, obtained by proceedings which I have indicated, but that, in addition to all this, loan upon loan is being piled up. As my friend, M. Janson, has said, the Congo State is controlled by no one, no publicity surrounds it, and one is compelled to make complicated calculations in order to obtain an idea of the total of the loans which have been effected. If one day the Congo State should be taken over by Belgium, we should have to begin by paying the whole of its debts.

M. Janson:—And we are told that we have no interest in the question!

M. Lorand:—We were, however, told that we should have nothing to fear on this score. When, in 1901, we relinquished the right of demanding from the Congo State any of its accounts, or any details at all, not even the communication of its Budget and its trade statistics, formal assurances were given to us in this respect. M. Beernaert, who had reasons, perhaps, to be suspicious, demanded in 1901 the immediate annexation of the Congo, to put an end to abuses which he must have known were possible. An

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* Public monument erected to celebrate the anniversary of Belgian independence.

† A glorious advertisement for King Leopold.

official communication was then sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which it was said that it was not likely that the Congo State would embark upon a policy of loans calculated to reduce the value of the Colony. Once more this was a promise—the custom of the Congo State is to keep no account of such promises. Notwithstanding the specific pledges of the Convention of 1890, the Congo State had secretly, and without authority, borrowed several millions from M. de Browne de Tiège, and had ceded to him, in guarantee, an enormous slice of its territory. Perhaps at that particular moment it was possible for the Congo State to plead necessity as an attempt to excuse so flagrant a violation of the pledges undertaken towards Belgium. To-day, again, we have been promised that the Congo State will not be saddled with new loans, and, notwithstanding this, loan upon loan is issued, not for the needs of the Congo, but for sumptuous works in Belgium. **Therefore, gentlemen, when we are told that forced rubber labour must be maintained, and with it all the concomitants of horror necessary to its maintenance, on the plea of the unsatisfactory condition of the Congo States finances, the plea is in flagrant contradiction with the facts.** This excuse of the necessity of forced labour to balance the revenue and expenditure of the Congo cannot be seriously made, and it is inconceivable that the Commission should have attempted to invoke it,* when we see in Belgium the beneficiary of the *Domaine de la Couronne* of the Congo State spreading himself out in the extravagances which are known. It is said that these extravagances are devoted to public and artistic objects, but they are none the less the product of the *corvée*, and the outrageous exploitation of rubber, which is depopulating Africa, and filling it with abominations, thus placing Belgium in a position which her honour cannot allow her to accept.

What can we do, and what ought we to do?

It is obvious that the interpellation of M. Vandervelde was indispensable. The attention which the House and the public are giving to it, proves it abundantly.† It was not possible for the honour of Belgium—it is from that point of view that I place myself especially in this matter—that this interpellation should not have taken place. It would have spelt our moral decadence, to use M. Woeste's words, if a public debate had not taken place in this Chamber after the publication of the disclosures of the Commission of Inquiry. The report of the latter, indeed, has been a revelation for a certain number of our countrymen, and, perhaps, for a certain number of our colleagues. For us it has simply been the confirmation of what we knew, and what we had vainly denounced. But we have had the satisfaction of obtaining in this House at last a general reprobation of the abuses and of the proceedings employed in the Congo. The interruption of M. Terwangne just now shows, gentlemen, that such is your unanimous sentiment. M. Woeste alone has not uttered a word

* This, indeed, is one of the incomprehensible portions of the Report.

† It is significant of the utterly inadequate manner in which the London Press is represented in Brussels that a few insignificant lines only appeared day by day in British newspapers.

of censure. But what matter? This is a question of justice and humanity, and once more we can do without M. Woeste (laughter on the extreme left). We shall be told presently, no doubt, what we can do. What means of action have we on the Congo State? It is an independent and sovereign State. This State, it seems, must be intangible and sacro-saint in the name of Belgian patriotism, so long as there is a question of throwing light upon the consequence of its actions; but, the moment it becomes a question of asking it to account for its actions, this State becomes for us a foreign State, like all other foreign States! We are not allowed even to recall the fact that it was created by Europe, with a special object of civilisation and humanity, and that the results of its administration are the exact opposite to those which its founders intended. Nevertheless, this State is so little a foreign State for us that when we point out the condition of affairs on the Congo, the Belgian Government hastens to defend systematically, and notwithstanding everything, all that takes place in the Congo, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs comes down to this House and reads us a speech, which is nothing more than a repetition of all the *communiqués* which the Congo Government publishes in the Press, and distributes everywhere, even on the seats of the *wagons-lits* (laughter). On the other hand, it seems that our diplomatists abroad follow the lead of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and proclaim that everything which is said against the Congo State is calumny, indulged in by evil people, animated by disreputable intentions * Moreover, the Government continues to lend its magistrates, notably the magistrate who is at the head of the Press Bureau, and its officials, to the Congo Government, because the administration of that Government includes a large number of Belgian officials. Finally, the Belgian Government lends its officers in considerable numbers, so much so, indeed, that it would be impossible for the Congo State to continue its system of oppression towards the native population if the Belgian Government did not help it by furnishing it with a large number of its officers and non-commissioned officers, who are called upon to exercise in Africa, not the noble profession for which they entered the Belgian Army, but the business of rubber merchants and tax-gatherers, under the odious conditions of which I have informed you, according to the admissions of the Commission of Inquiry.

Well, to-day, gentlemen, the cup is full; it is overflowing. You refused to hear the indignant protests of the public in other civilised countries, and of independent individuals in Belgium; now you can no longer escape the movement of reprobation which is becoming universal. You can certainly no longer escape from it by saying that the charges brought against the Congo State are British calumnies, seeing that all the charges levelled at the Congo State have been admitted by the Commission of Inquiry as being the result of the Congo State's own system of outrageous exploitation of the people, enslaved to produce rubber, fought and massacred when they did not produce it. What sanction are you going to give to these overwhelming disclosures? I understand and I respect the feelings of those who recoil before the idea of

* Notably in the United States of America.

denouncing to foreign Powers, signatories to the Act of Berlin, actions which constitute a flagrant violation of that Act, and which may provoke a new International Conference. But what I do not understand is that the Belgian Government, which is in daily touch with the Congo State, should not say to it, "Enough! You have pursued up to the present a system of whose consequences you have probably been ignorant, but which has led to a mass of abuses which you had not foreseen. To-day, these abuses are admitted; they are the result of the system adopted by you to draw the largest possible profits from the Colony. They are of a kind which call for vengeance, and which cannot be tolerated. They must disappear immediately, and radically, and Belgium will not remain a single day responsible with you for a state of affairs recognised by the Commission of Inquiry. You shall have no more officers, no more magistrates, no more officials of the Belgian State, if you do not immediately make up your mind to alter radically an admitted situation!"

If the Government is prepared to tell us that it will do this, I shall be the first to congratulate it for having accomplished, although very late in the day, its duty. But if this is not what you are going to tell us, gentlemen (addressing the Government), you will be gravely lacking in your duties towards Belgium in tolerating the continuance of the abusive system which we have demonstrated. You will have affected in the gravest way the honour as well as the interests of Belgium. (Loud applause on the extreme left and on the left. The speaker is congratulated by his political friends.)

Speech by the Premier.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER (Premier, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Minister of Public Works):—Gentlemen, the hon. M. Lorand is living in a fool's paradise if he thinks that anybody is going to believe in the impartiality of which he boasted in the opening part of his speech. The honourable member told us that he had no animosity against the King, or against his African work. Now, if in Belgium, from the very first moment, there has been found a systematic adversary of the African enterprise, from the very first that adversary has been M. Lorand.

M. FLECHET:—That proves that he saw clearly.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—The Belgians had hardly set foot in Africa before the honourable member denounced the enterprise of our countrymen as being of evil omen to the mother country.

M. LORAND:—I was not mistaken.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You are an anti-coloniser, an anti-colonial by principle, and, in consequence, I ask the House to receive your opinions with suspicion.

M. LORAND:—My mistake has been to predict for twenty years everything which has happened (applause on the extreme left—(protests on the right).

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—For my part, I intend to render homage at once to the colonial work accomplished in the Congo. First as regards the actual and immediate interest of our country. It cannot be denied that, without the Congo, we should be ten years behindhand in our economic expansion. Did not M. Lorand, as a new Cassandra, predict not so long ago that the construction of the Congo Railway was an enterprise bound to fail, and to be the tomb of black workmen?* The honourable member even proposed, at a given moment, to abandon the enterprise. He was prepared to sacrifice the millions already subscribed to it by Belgium. Well, we know what the Congo railway has become! And M. Lorand, with such errors to his debit, returns once more to-day to throw opprobium on the Congo enterprise.

M. PEPIN:—You are seeking a diversion. What you are saying has no significance.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I have the right to examine, as the House has the right to ask, if we are in the presence of a critic sincerely desirous of enlightening himself, or of an adversary full of partiality.

M. LORAND:—You can decide as you please.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Let us then discuss the point. I ask to be heard. Why did the hon. M. Lorand not speak to us of the abuses which have taken place in French and German Africa? (Interruption.) Must all colonisation be condemned because abuses are committed in the colonies? Must Belgium be judged from the contents of her prisons?

M. TERWAGNE:—Belgium will be judged from her Government, and that is enough!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I do not fear the verdict. To listen to M. Lorand, it would really seem as though the Commission of Inquiry had painted the desolating picture which he has drawn for us, as regards the moral condition of that African colony. It would almost seem as though the honourable member has failed to read the Report through.

M. LORAND:—I have done nothing else but read the Report.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You displayed everything which related to abuses, which all deplore as much as you do. You systematically left in the shade, and in silence, passages where the Commissioners proclaimed emphatically the beauty and the grandeur of the Congo enterprise. My first duty, gentlemen, is to repair this omission of M. Lorand:—

"Let us say at once"—you may read this in the Report—"that in travelling on the Congo, and in comparing it involuntarily with its old condition, which one knows by the reports of explorers, the impression one has is that of admiration and astonishment. In these territories, which, twenty-five years ago, were still plunged in the most frightful barbarism, and which only a few white men had crossed with superhuman effort, the target at each moment for the arrows of hostile peoples; in these regions, where tribes, decimated by the raids of Arab slave-traders, fought one another con-

* It was, in fact, the tomb of something like 3,000 black workmen, but as a paying enterprise it has been a great success.

tinuously and unmercifully; where at each moment slave markets were to be met with, in which the purchasers pointed out and labelled the victims whose throats were to be cut, or the individuals they coveted; where the funerals of village chiefs were celebrated by atrocious hetacombs, whole villages massacred, and slaves and women buried alive; in this sinister and mysterious continent a State has arisen and become organised with marvellous rapidity, introducing into Central Africa the benefits of civilisation; to-day security reigns throughout this immense territory;* almost everywhere the white man who is not animated by hostile intentions can travel without escort and without arms;† the slave trade has disappeared,‡ and cannibalism is severely punished, retreats and hides itself.§ Human sacrifices are becoming scarce. Cities which rival our most coquettish sea-side resorts light up and animate the banks of the great river,‖ and the starting point and terminus of the Lower Congo Railway; Matadi, where ocean steamers anchor; Leopoldville, the great fluvial port, with its active workshops, make us think of our industrial European cities. The Moyamba Railway, the Cataract Railway, constructed in the most hilly districts; the Great Lakes Railway, which pierces the heart of the Equatorial forest; sixty to eighty steamers which ply the Congo and its affluents; this regular service of postal communication, this telegraph line, which covers 1,200 kilos.; these hospitals, established in the principal centres; all these things, born of yesterday, give to the traveller the impression that he is travelling, not in barbarous Central Africa, unknown a quarter of a century ago, but in a country which has long been conquered by European civilisation; and one asks one's self what magic wand, what powerful qualities, what heroic efforts, have been able to thus transform in a few years the face of the land. This impression becomes keener still when we see the mechanism already carried to such perfection by the State at work. With a small number of officials, the State has solved the difficult problem of administering, in an effective manner, its vast territory. Thanks to the judicious distribution of stations, the State has been able to establish contact almost everywhere with the natives, and very few are the villages which do not admit to-day the authority of Bula Matadi.** With all these stations, the furthest as well as the nearest, the Boma Government is in constant and regular communication. It is the sole centre whence reports accumulate from all points of the country. Periodical reports enable it to profit from the experience of its 2,000 agents, and its own directing influence is powerfully felt. By the instructions which it gives unceasingly to the principal officials, it impregnates all the districts with ideas which become the common programme of officials of all ranks. The common purpose appears everywhere.†† The central machinery of the Congolese organisation works with rapidity and precision, without halting, and without friction. The judicial establishment must be praised. Its finest title to glory is the popularity which the magistrates who compose it retain amongst the common people.‡‡ Do not let us forget, moreover, the considerable work accomplished, side by side with that of the State, by the missionaries of all denominations. With their comfortable buildings, their chapels, their schools, their fine plantations, their shops, they have in many places considerably advanced civilisation."

Such, gentlemen, is what the Report of the Inquiry has noted. Such the work which M. Lorand drags in the mud. On what side is real patriotism? On the side of all those who, having founded,

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* As testified by the Report itself!

† Which means, since fighting is taking place more or less all over the territory, and has been for the last ten years, that the white man is everywhere animated with hostile intentions.

‡ As borne witness to by the Report itself!

§ As borne witness to by the massacre of Yandjali two years ago, where a party of missionaries came upon Congo State troops cutting up and stuffing into bags portions of the dead bodies of the villagers whom they had slaughtered. Witness also the cannibalistic orgies of the A.B.I.R. rubber sentries.

‖ The inhabitants within forty miles radius of them being subjected, in order to maintain the up-keep of these charming centres of European vice (the Commission did not touch on that!), to taxation in staple food-stuffs, so crushing that "in another five years, the population will have been wiped out."—*Vide* Report of the Commission.

** Which authority has brought them such untold blessings.

†† Rubber, rubber, rubber, all the day!

‡‡ Especially, we may assume, those "distinguished magistrates" *(vide* Report) who, according to the Commission, look upon the seizure of women, and their incarceration in hostage-houses, as the "mildest and most humane form of coercion."

and pursued with unceasing perseverance, that admirable Congo enterprise, condemn individual abuses as much as M. Lorand can condemn them; or of those who only wish to see these abuses, to generalise them, in order the better to criticise the enterprise itself? (Applause on the right.)

M. Bertrand:—It is the system which is condemned.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I am in a position to inform the Chamber of an inquiry which has recently confirmed the testimony I have just read. Governor-General Wahis has recently closed a tour of inspection, which was carried out in the Congo State. He has found that the condition of the natives is satisfactory,† and two Protestant missionaries have testified before him—I mention this since some people appear to attach so much importance to their testimony—and stated that, in their region, which extends from the mouth of the Mongalla to Stanleyville, there is no complaint to formulate.* On the other hand, the hon. M. Verhaegen, who paid yesterday to our valiant and devoted Catholic missionaries so well-deserved a homage, quoted the declaration of Monsignor Roelens, whose jurisdiction extends to Tanganyika, and who says that he has only witnessed a single abuse in fourteen years, and that this abuse was remedied the moment it was denounced. The reprehensible acts and actions noticed here and there are, therefore, far from characterising a system.

M. Vandervelde:—The abuses are the consequence of the system.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—They are not inherent to the system.

M. Vandervelde:—Why, it is palpable.

M. Lorand:—Absolutely so.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—One may always argue that abuses applied are the consequences of such and such a system. Nothing is easier, when one wishes to attack a system itself, and the principles upon which it is founded. In the present case, the general conclusions of the inquiry do not bear that out, but, obviously, what remains to be determined is whether the organisation of the system should be modified—I do not say to the extent of wholly suppressing abuses in a day, which would bring about a *millennium* on the Congo, but in order to reduce more and more these individual abuses. It is to this end that the Congo State is working ceaselessly, without it being necessary for us to intervene to press it to do so.

M. Vandervelde:—At last, then, you admit that the abuses are the outcome of the system?

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I admit nothing of the kind, and I am certain that the House has understood me. Gentlemen, the

† See Congo Reform Association's organ for May, and Mr. Whiteside's revelations in the Public Press.

* Why? Because an Italian officer and gentleman has been in charge of it, and has declined to allow the natives of his district to be taxed out of existence. He has now retired from the Congo service—Captain Scardino.

question of porterage has been touched on, and that is one of the greatest difficulties which faces us in Africa. The porterage requirements were specially noteworthy in the Cataracts region, and, to the great benefit of the natives, a railway has been constructed there, which has suppressed this primitive method of transport.

If Mr. Morel and his gang really wish to protect the natives . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—Mr. Morel is an honest man, whom you should not attack here. I challenge you to bring against him a single fact which tarnishes his honour.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You are getting annoyed too quickly . . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—There is a want of courage in attacking absent people. You would not dare to speak of any of us in the way you are speaking at the present moment.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: I fling you back your reproach. You do nothing else but attack the absent in your criticisms of the Congo State. Wait a moment until I explain myself. What I was about to remark was that the evils of the porterage system had been very much reduced since the Nile route had been utilised for the supplies consigned to the Lado Enclave. Now the British steamship companies on the Nile are refusing to undertake the transport of this material, and the natives will have to begin once more their hard task of head carriage.

Will Mr. Morel take up the defence of the Congo natives against the English steamship companies? He would find therein an opportunity for the exercise of his negrophile philanthropy.*

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* On this point, *Le Peuple*, of Brussels, of the 10th March, published the following letter:—"The Bahr-el-Ghazal: Mr. Morel writes us as follows:—

"Sir,—In the Parliamentary Report of the Congo debate in the Belgian House, I note that M. de Smet de Naeyer, in referring to 'Mr. Morel and his gang,' said: 'What I was about to remark was that the evils of the porterage system had been very much reduced since the Nile route had been utilised for the supplies consigned to the Lado Enclave. Now the British steamship companies on the Nile are refusing to undertake the transport of this material, and the natives will have to begin once more their hard task of head carriage. Will Mr. Morel take the defence of the Congo natives against the English steamship companies? He would find therein an opportunity of exercising his negrophile philanthropy.'

"M. de Smet de Naeyer is somewhat lacking in humour. I do not need the services of my 'gang' in order to answer him. In the first place, it is the Anglo-Egyptian Government, and not the English steamship companies, which has closed the Nile route to material consigned to the Lado Enclave. M. de Smet de Naeyer would have been well advised to have said so; he might have added why the Anglo-Egyptian Government has taken this step. The reason of it is a very simple one. Congo troops have invaded Anglo-Egyptian territory outside the Lado Enclave, and have established themselves therein, by order of the Sovereign of the Congo State. The British Government has on several occasions requested the Congo troops to withdraw. They have not done so, their officers acting under the direct orders of the Sovereign of the Congo State. Losing patience, the Anglo-Egyptian authorities have now closed the Nile route to the Congo State. I have no intention of discussing here the question at issue between the British Government and the Sovereign of the Congo State on the subject of the Bahr-el-Ghazal; I have dealt with it elsewhere. But I note that, in this respect, the declarations of M. de Smet de Naeyer are quite as remarkable as many others made by him in the course of this debate. In the first place, if the Nile route is now closed to the Congo Government, this is wholly due to the incomprehensible policy of the Sovereign-King in the valley of the Nile. Upon him, and upon him alone, falls all the responsibility of this policy. In the second

M. LORAND:—I am convinced that you will be satisfied. Every time that abuses take place in English colonies, there have always been found, and there always will be found, honourable men in England to protest, and to obtain, through the action of public opinion, the reform of such abuses, and it is to the credit of England.

M. DELVEAUX:—This takes place in all countries.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Quite so. England has not the monopoly of philanthropic work, and I do not think that our country is on the last rung of the ladder in that respect. But M. Lorand is filled with good-will towards foreigners who attack us, whilst he is excessively severe on Belgians who are working to the accomplishment of an international enterprise, or who defend it.

M. LORAND:—The society created in England to protect the Congo natives has always protested against abuses which have taken place in English colonies, and the Government of the Congo State has only found a single defender in the House of Commons; that defender being Mr. Chamberlain, the man of the Transvaal War, of Chinese labour, and the concentration camps.*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I shall not follow you on that ground. Gentlemen, the debate has reached the stage where we may ask ourselves to whom the interpellation is addressed (ironical laughter on the extreme left).

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place, M. de Smet de Naeyer is not well inspired in seeking to equivocate on this specific subject. The policy of the Sovereign King in the valley of the Nile has already caused the loss of thousands of human lives—let M. de Smet de Naeyer refresh his memory by reading over the debates of the Belgian House in 1903. And what is the explanation of this policy? What profit can Belgium draw, if one day she takes over the Congo, from the sterile territory which is called the Lado Enclave? Why has the Sovereign King been filling, for years past, the Lado Enclave with troops and ammunition of war? Why is he spending the revenues of the Congo State in constructing armed forts therein? What does he wish to do there? Is he seeking a quarrel with England? If not, what is his object? It is really amusing for M. de Smet de Naeyer to suggest that I should protest to the Anglo-Egyptian Government, because it has adopted a measure rendered imperative by the policy of the Sovereign King, when that policy has piled up masses of dead in the Rubi-Welle region, along the Buta-Libokwa-Nile route; a policy which, as the Commission of Inquiry recognised, is threatening the natives with extermination. If it be true, which I strongly doubt—because I do not believe that the Anglo-Egyptian authorities have ever allowed the transport by British vessels on the Nile of munitions of war for the Lado Enclave—that porterage on the Congo-Nile route was abandoned from the time that the English allowed material for the Lado Enclave to be transported *via* the Nile, it is obvious that if, now that England is compelled by the policy of the Congo State to withdraw this privilege, the Congo State intends to subject once more the Congo natives, inhabiting the region crossed by the Nile route, to an intensive porterage, the entire responsibility thereof falls upon the Sovereign King, and upon no one else. I rely upon your courtesy to publish this letter, and with anticipated thanks,

"I am,

"Yours faithfully,

(Signed) E. D. MOREL,

"Hon. Sec., Congo Reform Association."

The recently-concluded Anglo-Congolese territory clears King Leopold and his myrmidons, bag and baggage, from the Bahr-el-Ghazal, with the exception of the small Lado Enclave. It is a great solace for the Congo natives.

* It is hardly accurate to say that Mr. Chamberlain has defended the Congo State in the British House of Commons. He once made an allusion to the Congo, which he may since have looked upon as unfortunate, in connection with Chinese Labour.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You have created such an abnormal situation that it is difficult to interpellate you under normal conditions.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—What is in the highest degree abnormal is your interpellation, as I propose to show. One may ask one's self, I said, to whom this interpellation is addressed; what is its object, and what can be its practical conclusion. In appearance, and according to the terms in which it is drawn up, the interpellation is addressed to the Belgian Government, the only public body which is called upon to give an account of its actions before the Belgian Parliament. In point of fact, the interpellation is directed against the legislation and internal administration of the Congo State, that is to say, of a foreign State, of a State juridically independent—as its name implies—of Belgium, as well as of any other State. As the Report of the Commission of Inquiry rightly says:—

> "The Powers recognised the sovereign existence of the Congo State, but without participating in any way either in its work or in its development, and naturally apart from any idea of assistance or tutelage, which would be incompatible with the position of independence given to the State."

This elementary opinion of the international situation of the Congo State has since been proclaimed simultaneously in London* and in Washington. Only a few days ago, the Secretary of State of the United States declared that no country had the right to interfere in the government of the Congo State.†

I will now examine the matter which the interpellation contains. In appearance, and according to the terms in which it is drawn up, the interpellation was to bear upon the following objects:

1. The duties which are incumbent upon Belgium as signatory Power to the Berlin Act of 1885.
2. The inconveniences which result for Belgium from the *régime* of personal union with the Congo State.
3. Placing Belgian officers and officials at the disposal of the Congo State.

The Hon. M. Vandervelde completely abandoned the above programme; he specified no duty incumbent upon Belgium relating to the facts which he has extracted from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, or other publications or documents; he has shown no inconveniences resulting for Belgium from personal union with the Congo State; and, finally, if he referred to Belgian officials placed at the disposal of the Congo State, it was simply to attack a magistrate and a vice-consul, who, by their protests, communicated to the House, disposed at once of the charges which they thought had been brought against them.

M. VANDERVELDE:—What! You assert that I formulated against them charges they have disposed of?

M. LORAND:—And it is all written!

M. VANDERVELDE:—Pardon me. I must ask you to specify what you have just said.

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* What Sir Edward Grey said was that no single party to an international agreement could denounce it.

† M. Root has since modified his attitude.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Don't try to bring up a side issue, I beg.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Then don't indulge in insinuations.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—M. Vandervelde and M. Lorand were allowed to pronounce their indictments without being interrupted, and I shall be happy if they will not seek to draw me away from the arguments which I am presenting to the House.

M. VANDERVELDE:—It is impossible that I should allow you to make a statement which is quite inaccurate.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You are really reversing our respective parts! It will be open for you to reply to me, if you think necessary,

M. VANDERVELDE:—I take note of the inaccuracy of what you have said.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I maintain, therefore, in the first place, gentlemen, that the interpellation, as my colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, showed, is totally lacking in a juridical basis, from the point of view of public international law.

M. VANDERVELDE:—How comes it, then, that the Hon. M. Beernaert has brought forward a resolution? (Laughter on the extreme left.)

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—No doubt M. Vandervelde himself had quite understood this, because the conclusions which he developed are wide of the apparent programme which he traced out for himself. There is no question of the Belgian Government intervening; there is no question of destroying the personal union, or modifying the *régime;* there is no question of recalling Belgian officers or officials in the service of the Congo State. Leaving on one side all these labels of his interpellation, the hon. member asks the House to—

"Appoint a Commission, instructed to make an inquiry on the consequences which might result for Belgium from the ultimate annexation of the Congo, and of the fulfilment of the reforms necessary to ensure the preservation of the native peoples, and the improvement of their moral and material conditions of existence."

But M. Vandervelde does not appear to attach more importance to his proposal for an inquiry than to the original programme of his interpellation, seeing that he has proclaimed his agreement with the resolution brought forward by M. Masson, who confines himself to inviting the Government to ask from the Congo State the communication of all documents, accounts, and reports of a nature to enlighten Parliament, in view of a discussion on the ultimate annexation of the Congo. After the author of the interpellation, the House heard M. Bertrand, who stated that he wished to examine the financial and economic aspects of the Congo question. M. Bertrand spoke of the financial situation of the Congo, and the State's debt, of the expenses of the Sovereign King, even of the manner in which the contracts for the construction of the Brussels Palace were placed. But I ask myself in vain what conclusions he arrives at! In all this affair, gentlemen, there is a

certain person who is fulminated against, who is as an accused party, who is condemned in advance, and who has not been heard (approval on the right); this someone is the Congo State, or rather all those who touch the Congo.* The accused parties and the condemned parties, of whom I speak, constitute the Government of the Congo State, the *Domaine de la Couronne*, the Sovereign King, the *Force Publique*, the Administration, the Magistracy, the Commercial Companies. Faults of organisation, vices in application, abuses, and excesses have been pointed out. The Government of the Congo State instituted a Commission of Inquiry, in order to verify the facts, and to make ultimate suggestions for improvement. The Commission handed in its Report on the 13th October, 1905, and the Congo Government sent a copy of it to the Governor-General, published it, and appointed a Commission, "instructed to consider its conclusions, to formulate proposals which they thought necessary, and to seek for practical means of realising them," and it is at this moment, under cover of an interpellation addressed to the Belgian Government, that attacks of all kinds, and the gravest accusations against the Congo enterprise as a whole, are brought before this House! In favour of the gale which, as M. Woeste well said, blows at this moment upon the Congo State, members can be found who come here and make a chorus with those who are endeavouring to hound on public opinion against an enterprise, a study of which on the spot, in its fundamental organisation, and in its present state of advancement, dragged from the Commission of Inquiry a cry of admiration! (Applause on the right.) You have heard, gentlemen, that passage, so sincerely eulogious, from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, which I quoted at the beginning of my speech. Never, so far as I know, have any of the friends of the Congo State, who are naturally suspicious, in the eyes of M. Vandervelde and M. Lorand, gone so far in praising the work of Belgians in Africa (applause on the right).

M. Vandervelde:—The Report has been distributed to all the members of the House; they can judge of its significance.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—Quite so, and that is why I am convinced that I shall find myself holding a common opinion with all those who care to judge general and specific facts impartially, in considering the difficulties of a work of African colonisation, and by taking account of the circumstances and of the environment. The Commission of Inquiry itself foresaw the abusive manner in which many of its conclusions might be utilised, from the point of view of the judgment which might be invoked on the errors, the faults and excesses which it disclosed:—

"Interpreting in the widest manner the mission which was confided to us, we have riddled, from the critical point of view, the whole administration of the Congo State in our Report. We have pointed out, without hiding any of them, every abuse which struck us, but we do not retain the illusion that those who read our work may be in a position to appreciate, sanely and impartially, the Congo enterprise. It is impossible to appreciate fairly African matters unless one has seen them; one might almost say

* I omit several interruptions here, which relate to a play upon the word "touchent," used by the Prime Minister, and which has a double meaning in French.

unless one has lived them. Examined from a Europeon point of view, a large number of the facts disclosed by us present a character which they cannot have in the eyes of those who have been witnesses of them. It is thus that distinguished magistrates, amongst those some whose help was the most useful to us in seeking after truth, assured us that, in their opinion, the retention of women as hostages in the stations was the mildest and most humane, and the most efficacious, means of coercion, the most in harmony with native habits, notwithstanding that they admitted that, judged from a distance, this measure would appear as a crying iniquity.* It is obvious that the legislation itself, with a juridical edifice so rapidly constructed, which was admired by an impartial and even severe criticism, and whose only fault is perhaps, that of being theoretically too perfect, this legislation, we think, does not always take into sufficient account the conditions of the country, and of the people for whom it is framed. One must not lose sight of the fact that, notwithstanding the progress realised, the natives of the Congo are still, in a large majority, savages. Twenty centuries were needed to make of Gaul, in the time of the Cæsars, the France and Belgium of to-day, and if our ancestors were, in the eyes of the Roman conquerors, barbarians, we can say without temerity that they were civilised beings in comparison with the cannibals who peopled the immense territory of the State at the time of its creation. How can it be supposed that such 'European' legislation as that of the Congo State should not meet frequently with insurmountable obstacles in the course of application?† Hence the contradictions between law and practice; hence the violation of the law which the Courts punish, while extending to their authors the benefit of extenuating circumstances. The Court of Appeal at Boma, notably, has passed verdicts within the last few years of the most severe character, but has always taken

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* In a letter to the Foreign Office, dated 16th January, 1906, the Congo Reform Association wrote:—"My Committee welcomes the proposals referred to in your letter, and to which its attention had been drawn, for a reform of the judicial organisation of the State, as recommended by the Commission of Inquiry, calculated to make the administration of justice independent of the Executive authority, while noting that the enjoyment of independence on the part of the Judicial authorities—now seen to be, not independence, but dependence—has been claimed hitherto as fully secured. But it would seem, from statements contained in the Commission's Report, that a reform more profound and more far-reaching than the one suggested is required, in view of the disclosures made to the Commissioners by 'distinguished magistrates' (p. 280), to the effect that, in their view, 'the retention of women hostages in the stations was the mildest and most humane form of coercion' (p. 280). When civilisation is presented to the primitive races of Central Africa in the form of the seizing and incarceration of women, as the 'mildest and most humane' method of stimulating the production of rubber on the part of their male relatives, and that by those specially selected as representing the laws and customs of civilised usage, my Committee augurs but little from the reforms recommended by the Commission. Apart from the abundant evidence available as to the treatment meted out to women hostages in the prisons, notably the revelations in the Mongalla massacre, in the Tilkens case, in the testimony of missionaries like Messrs. Scrivener, Gilchrist, and Ruskin—my Committee sees in the enunciation of such mediæval doctrines by 'distinguished magistrates' further melancholy proof of the spirit which animates the Congo Administration."

† The whole of such legislation being founded, not upon the fulfilment of a common task for the dual benefit of the European and the native, but upon the pillage of the native for the profit of the European. Moreover, and this is a point which, in view of all the criticism which the practices of the Congo State call for, has not been perhaps sufficiently emphasised, viz., the theoretical legislation of the Congo State has been framed by men who have not the very least notion of African affairs. The above passage in the Report of the Commission, in which the transformation of ancient Gaul into modern France and Belgium is referred to, is proof of the strange misconceptions which prevail even among men like the Commissioners, one of whom at least may be said to be a distinguished student of European history. Precisely, on that account, perhaps, is this misconception the more glaring. The attempt to build up a European State-form in the African tropics, even were it honest (and in the minds, no doubt, of some of the framers of the theoretical legislation of the Congo State, it is honest), is a chimera. The African tropics can never be Europeanised, and every attempt to work on such lines, even though the motives were of the purest, is doomed to absolute and utter failure.

into account the difficulties in which Europeans are placed.† To develop itself, the Congo State is confronted with the absolute necessity of exploiting the natural riches of the soil, and the sole labour of which it can make use of is to be found amongst the natives, who are refractory to work. Officials, enervated by a treacherous climate, which is always debilitating, and sometimes deadly, are isolated in the midst of savage peoples, and every day they see around them nothing but demoralising sights. They leave Europe with a respect for human life, and they soon see, in the midst of the barbarous surroundings to which they have been transplanted, that human life has no price. From infancy they have been taught to love their fellow creatures, and they find amongst the natives with whom they live an absolute ignorance of the feeling which is called charity—the native, indeed, does not understand that anything can be done without being compelled by personal interest, or by coercion. They are witnesses in the villages of the miserable condition of the weak and infirm, upon whom the Chiefs and the leading men place all the burden of labour when they can; everywhere they see women degraded to the condition of beasts of burden, working without interruption, saddled with nearly all the labour."

Finally, gentlemen, I extract from the same document the most striking homage which can be rendered morally to the legislation of the Congo State:—

"The Congo State might have avoided, if it had chosen to do so, a large part of the abuses which have been pointed out, nearly all of which find their root in the difficulty of making the native work. It would have been sufficient to imitate the example of various colonial governments, and to have authorised the free importation of alcohol into its territory. Alcohol, facts prove it abundantly, would soon have become an imperious need for the black. In order to satisfy it, he would have been compelled to conquer his native indolence. If the remuneration granted to taxpayers, instead of consisting in cotton goods and other useful products, had been given to them in trade gin, one would have soon have seen the chiefs and the principal men of each village driving to work, with the utmost energy, all those under their authority. Far be it from us to suggest such a measure, which would have as a consequence the fatal degradation of a whole race in a few years. On the contrary, the interdiction against the importation of alcohol in the Congo is, with the suppression of slavery, the finest title to the glory of the Congo State. Humanity will always be grateful to it for having declined to use this powerful lever, to which others have had recourse, and having thus kept out of Africa a more terrible and more destructive evil than the slave trade." (Applause on the right.)*

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† The world so far has been favoured—and not by the Congo State!—with but one judgment of the Boma Appeal Court, the judgment in the Caudron case, and the "difficulties" with which Europeans are confronted, and which led the Court upon that occasion to grant extenuating circumstances to a man convicted of having caused the murder of over 100 human beings, guilty of no crime, not even of resistance, may be estimated by the following passage in the verdict delivered by Baron Nisco, the then judge of the Appeal Court, and one of the members of the Commission of Inquiry. The learned Judge, in concluding, for extenuating circumstances, pointed out that the accused had laboured in the midst of a population "entirely refractory to all kinds of work, and which only respects the law of force, knows no other persuasion than terror." Such is the spirit with which native problems are approached on the Congo, even by the few respectable elements which are to be found in its organisation.

* There are many passages in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry which one reads with amazement, in view of the general admissions which the Report contains; passages which make one doubt whether the Commissioners themselves ever wrote them. But for inaccuracy of fact, and for superlative hypocrisy, this passage stands pre-eminent. In the first place, the credit of excluding the importation of liquor in the Upper Congo belongs, not to the Congo State, but to the signatory Powers of the Berlin Act, which insisted upon this prohibition, largely owing to the initiative of Great Britain, which is acting in a similar manner, with regard to Morocco, at the present moment. In the second place, the suggestion that the "native taxpayer" is paid on the Congo with "cotton goods, and other useful articles," is sheer mendacity. The taxpayer on the Congo is usually paid with ball cartridge, the lash, and the hostage house. In the third place, the endeavour which is here made to assert that the commercial activity of the African native is wholly due to a passion for alcohol is an outrageous travesty of the truth. In the fourth place, this dragging in of the liquor traffic argument,

Will those who contradict me, MM. Vandervelde, Bertrand, and Lorand, refuse to share this feeling of gratitude.

M. Bertrand:—And MM. Beernaert, Colfs and Terwagne?

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—After the incontestable proof which the Congo Government has given of its wisdom, its foresight, and its perseverance in the working of its internal organisation to deny to it the intention, will and energy to bring about reforms which may be necessary, and to destroy abuses, is to inflict upon it an outrage, against which reason and justice protest (renewed applause on the right). A Commission of Reforms has just been instituted. Belgium, like all the other signatory Powers of the Berlin Act, can only wait with confidence the progress which the work of this Commission will bring about. One can really never have read the history of nations to fail to recognise, as has been done, the grandeur of the work accomplished in the Congo.

M. Terwagne:—But this comparison of yours is not serious?

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—It is the Commission of Inquiry itself which compares the work accomplished by that Government in less than a quarter of a century with the work of ancient Gaul.

M. Masson:—We recognise that the Congo State has done great things.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—You do not deny it, my dear colleague, but people around you do not agree, and I protest once more against the unjust and unpatriotic language of those who cast opprobrium on the Congo enterprise.

M. Vandervelde:—You have said that a hundred times already.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—It is not the Government's business to defend the Congo State. On that head we have no duty to perform, or responsibility to fulfil, but as a Belgian I have difficulty in containing my indignation . . . .

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in order to wash the sins (sins which call to heaven, if any have ever done, for punishment and redress) of the Congo administration, can only fill the mind of every honest man with sheer disgust. It is better, it seems, for the regeneration of the native, to subject him to all that the Congo Government has subjected him to, rather than allow him, if he so chooses, to spend a portion of his earnings in the luxury of a drink (it seems to be quite overlooked that every primitive people fabricates its own liquor)! Similarly might the highwayman be justified in robbing his victim, lest perchance some of the money taken from his victim's pocket might have been expended in the public-house. By the same process of reasoning, the highwayman would be justified if, after robbing his victim, he completed his regenerating task by knocking him on the head! The problem of the liquor traffic in Africa, like the problem of the liquor traffic in Europe, and all over the world, is a problem fraught with the very gravest difficulties. But to seek to compare evils which may be produced by the liquor traffic in Africa with the evils of the Congo State system is a piece of monumental effrontery. I am all the freer to say this, personally, as I have written against the liquor traffic in Africa. The British Government, it may be noted, has ever stood in the forefront of an increased Customs' House duty on the importation of African spirit, and to-morrow not only the British Government, but all British merchants engaged in the African trade, would welcome an International Conference to deal with the West African liquor trade, especially as regards the limitation of import and the purification of the product imported.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You do not appear in the least indignant!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:— . . . In face of this overflow of acrimony towards an enterprise which interests to such a great degree the honour and the prosperity of our country.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Are you speaking of a Belgian enterprise, or of a foreign enterprise?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Perhaps I ought to be less affected by such feelings, because since I have sat in this place I have heard our internal policy and our economic reforms attacked with the same bitterness . . . .

M. VANDERVELDE:—Such as the Agricultural Distilleries, for instance.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—If you wish to speak about Agricultural Distilleries, I will reply to your anti-alcoholic measures.

M. HUYSMANS:—Perhaps you had better not speak about them (laughter).

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I do not wish to go outside my speech, and I do not think that I am doing so when I say that certain members of this assembly, who inflict their immeasurable attacks upon the Congo State, are also those who ceaselessly attack, with as much injustice as doggedness, the policy of the Belgian Government.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You are, no doubt, about to make for the one hundredth time an apology for your financial measures.

M. BERTRAND:—Quite so; you are going to remind us that you have abolished the duty on cocoa and coffee.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—This perpetual backbiting does not hurt anyone. The truth is that we have led the country into a channel of prosperity which it had never known in the past, and the African enterprise has helped it enormously. Gentlemen, the House will not expect me to follow, point by point, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, and the speeches of my critics. In order to meet the specific and general statements they have made, I will limit myself to a few points which should especially be noted. Much has been said of the so-called appropriation of the land and of rubber collection. Now, it is well that one should understand, because the opponents of the Congo have been very careful not to say so, that an identical *régime* is practised in all other colonies.*

M. LORAND:—In his book, M. Cattier compared the systems prevailing in different colonies, and proved that the one which is in force in the Congo exists nowhere else.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I am about to show you that he is wrong. Passages of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry have been read out relating to the abuses connected with rubber collec-

* A statement absolutely, diametrically, and radically untrue.

tion. These abuses are certainly to be deplored, and they must be remedied. That is what the Congo State wishes, and one of the objects of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry will be to study the means of preventing their repetition. But there are other facts which are studiously concealed. The Commission of Inquiry recognised that the abuses are only individual faults, that they are not inherent to the system established, and stated explicitly:

1. That the State had the right to appropriate vacant land.
2. That the State had the right, and that it was necessary for it to itself exploit the forests and the lands of its domain.
3. The legitimacy and the necessity of establishing a labour tax.
4. The legitimacy and the necessity of applying coercion.*

The Commission bases all its remarks on this initial admission:—

"All production of trade in the Congo is only possible at the present time, and will only be possible for a long time to come, through native labour."

and the Report justifies coercion by the natural indolence of the native.†

M. Masson:—Is it by coercion that you intend to lead the natives to work?

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—In the earlier stages a certain amount of coercion cannot be avoided (interruption—uproar).

M. Janson:—It is with such arguments that slavery is justified.

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* It is precisely due to the fact that the Commission of Inquiry upheld this fundamental iniquity that, while its Report has been of enormous value, as substantiating once and for all the charges of atrocity brought against the Congo State for ten years, its Report is wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of the case, as the Congo Reform Association predicted would be so before the Commission left Belgium.

† One could, of course, fill pages of this publication in proving the absolute falsity of this excuse, not only as regards Tropical Africa in general, but as regards the Congo State itself. But I have before me a report, just received, drawn up by a renowned French explorer, M. Auguste Chevalier, who was engaged last year on a mission for the Governor-General of French West Africa, to study the economic development of some of the Foreign West African Colonies. M. Chevalier visited, amongst other tropical dependencies, the Gold Coast, and studied in particular the cocoa industry of the Gold Coast, which, as everyone knows who knows anything at all about Tropical Africa, is entirely a native industry, carried on by natives on their own land, in their own right, and for their own profit, an industry which in 1899 was only represented by an annual value of cocoa exported amounting to £16,000, but which in 1904 had risen to an annual value of £200,204. M. Chevalier, after noting with admiration the way in which this industry has become developed—the only part which the Government takes in it being to distribute *gratis* seeds to the natives from the Government station at Aburi, and in giving them such expert advice as the small but efficient staff at Aburi is capable of doing—closes his Report with the following passage:—

"It is not by coercion and forced labour that the development of the African cocoa industry will take large proportions, but by the system of encouraging and educating the native, which is so brilliantly carried on by the English in the Gold Coast." But one can only repeat here, for the hundredth time perhaps, that the arguments used by the Commission of Inquiry, by M. de Smet de Naeyer, and by the official and unofficial defenders of the Congo State, are necessary to cover a system which does not aim at the economic development of the African tropics in the interests of the inhabitants, and of the home manufacturer, but aims at the rapid pillage of the African tropics for the enrichment of private individuals in Europe.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You forget that one of the first acts of the Congo State was to suppress slavery.*

M. JANSON:—It was thus that the South American planters justified slavery.

M. LORAND:—The condition of the natives of the Congo is worse than the condition of the South American slaves ever was.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—It is ridiculous. Why, in the Congo it is only a matter of four or five days' labour per month.‡

M. LORAND:—It is not four or five days per month which are demanded of the negro; it is all the month, with the exception of four or five days. The Commission of Inquiry admits that in the most formal manner.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Not at all; the Commission admits the principle of the law, which is called the forty hours law.

M. LORAND:—The Report acknowledges, on the contrary, that the native has only three or four days left to him in the month, and is ever weighed down under the knowledge of new privations and new dangers, which he will have to incur in returning to the forest.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—The Commission points out the faults of organisation, and indicates reforms which appear to it to be useful. The Congo State will not fail, through the Commission of Reforms, to understand the evil, and apply the remedy. In any case, you will admit with me that labour which consists in making an incision in the rubber vines is not in itself very arduous (interruption—uproar). Moreover, gentlemen, forced labour is only a transitory step; the native will learn to work voluntarily, to satisfy the needs which have been created in him.§ You should know that all the Congo tribes are not equally indolent. Those who have been in contact for centuries with Portuguese merchants are accustomed to work. In certain colonies the negroes have been incited to work by filling them with alcohol. Is that what you want?†

M. MANSART:—The *chicotte* is still worse.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You forget to realise the state of affairs which existed in the Congo before the constitution of the State. Let the reports of the explorers of the Congo basin—Livingstone, Stanley, Cameron, and all the Belgians who have illustrated geographical science—be read, and you will see in the midst of what crime and atrocities the native populations were living. Their activity was confined to inter-tribal warfare, and the slave-

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* On paper, and to apply and to subject the people to a worse slavery than they had ever known before, in practice.

‡ A typical sentence!

§ The native will work anywhere for a fair wage, and will trade anywhere where he is given a market. Wherever the native of the Upper Congo had come into indirect contact, through the Coast tribes, with the white man, he traded long before the Congo State was born or thought of.

† See foot-note, page 126.

trade.* The abolition of the slave trade did not suppress slavery in the interior of Africa, nor these inter-tribal wars, which have become with these people a habit and a need. If the State did not make its direct and continuous influence felt over these peoples, the majority of them would return quickly to their primitive state of savagery. Where the action of the State is not absolutely effective, abominable abuses take place, which shows what is still to-day the mental condition of the native when left to his own instincts. Here is one of those acts of cruelty which took place a few months ago, on the confines of Katanga, which is reported by an English engineer established in that region. The latter got the story from one of his black employees sent by him to buy food from a neighbouring village.

M. BEERNAERT:—Has it been published?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—No, it is a private correspondence, of which I have had communication. I may add that this engineer is related to a distinguished English statesman, and I can certify to his high honour.

"While trading amongst the natives, I arrived at the village of Kayeye, on the Luzi river, a tributary of the Lubudi. Kayeye is three days from Mazanguli, and one day from Lualaba. I had bought food and sent it to Mazanguli, and there was more food in one of the village huts. While I was in this village, the Batetela were sighted at a distance of about a mile off. The Chief, myself, and those who could, fled away. We crossed the river, and from the other side we saw the Batetela invade the village. The old men, who could not take flight, attempted to defend themselves with their guns; but the Batetela, who had several guns, killed a few, and took some of the others prisoners. We saw them cut up and eat those whom they had killed. They had brought with them their women and their children, and ate five bodies and all my foodstuffs, then captured several men who were carrying loads. Those who were taken alive were examined, in order to see if they would do to be sold as slaves. If so, they were taken off to be sold to the Wandumbo; the old and the infirm had their throats cut, and eaten. They cut off their arms and legs while they were still living. We saw them cleaning the flesh, and boiling it in deep saucepans, after having salted it. When the men whom they had taken prisoners were very thin, they gave them their liberty, and said to them, "Go away, and feed yourselves well with cassava, in order that you may be fat for our next return."†

Here, gentlemen, is an absolutely contemporaneous fact, which gives you an idea of the frightful life of the native peoples left to

* Stanley said a good many things. He said, amongst other things, this: "The fixed and permanent way (he was referring to a railway) which will be such a benefit to the Cataract region just described, would be a still greater benefit to the Upper Congo, with its plain-like lands, *and to the keen, enterprising, high-spirited peoples* who occupy them. Even now many a flotilla descends the great river 500 miles down to Stanleyville, to wait patiently for months before their goods can be disposed of to the Lower Congo caravans." These are the people whom M. de Smet de Naeyer represents as sunk in perennial idleness, incapable of any incentive but the incentive of coercion.

† This is an interesting story. The teller not only saw the things, but heard all this from the opposite bank of the river! It is rather a pity that these cannibal natives should have been Batetela; a pity, I mean, from the point of view of M. de Smet de Naeyer's argument, seeing that it was by the help of these same Batetela that the Congo State exterminated the Arabs, leaving the Batetela free to ration themselves upon the bodies of the slain on the Arab side. Readers desirous of verifying the above statement can do so by procuring a copy of the "Fall of the Congo Arabs," by Dr. Hinde. There is another somewhat unfortunate point in the above narrative for M. de Smet de Naeyer's argument, and that is the somewhat naïve admission made by the story-teller that the Batetela in question were armed with guns. Now either these men must have been supplied with guns by the Katanga Trust, in which the Congo State holds the predominant number of shares, and otherwise controls, contrary to Congo State law; or else they were irregular troops employed by the Katanga Trust!

themselves, on the confines of the territory where the Congo State has been unable as yet to establish the order and security depicted by the Commission of Inquiry.

M. Beernaert:—Is this report printed?

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I said a moment ago that it was a private correspondence. Does the House wish that the Congo peoples should be allowed to welter in this condition of barbarism?

M. Terwagne:—The situation described in that letter is not general. It is exaggerated on purpose.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—The only means to restore order and security in this country is to subject the natives to discipline. The labour tax* brought about this result, and thus conferred a benefit. All the Companies established in the Congo, with the exception of the Kasai Company, which is in an especially favoured region, declared that they could not make the natives do anything, without coercion, and they begged the authorities of the State to intervene to compel the natives to work, or to give them means of exercising direct coercion upon them.§ I refer to the Companies established in the Upper Congo, where the collection of rubber has been abandoned to individuals, through the decree of the 8th November, 1903. The natives are free to bring, or not to bring, the produce of the forests to the Commercial Companies.† All these Companies claimed the intervention of the State, by saying that neither promise nor offer of even exaggerated salaries can make the natives work.‡ The people have very few means, and they prefer to live in a miserable state rather than to work for paid labour. Yet they reside in the forest, in regions where the collection of rubber only requires a minimum of effort.‖ It will be seen, therefore, that the labour tax is as necessary to the civilisation and to the education of the negro as to the development of trade on the Congo. That is the opinion which is very clearly expressed by Mons. Augouard, French Bishop of Brazzaville.

M. Masson:—It has not at all been made out that the peoples of the Upper Kasai were for long in relations with European trade. It has been affirmed, but it seems to me that M. Cattier has peremptorily refuted this assertion.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—In truth, the book of M. Cattier seems to have been raised to the height of the Bible! I shall reserve myself the right of showing in an instant to the House what that book is. Everyone knows that the Portuguese had been established for centuries in Angola, South of the Congo. Portuguese traders penetrated into the interior of the country by means of caravans, and it is, therefore, not astonishing that they should

* The labour "tax" was unlimited, and applied illegally for seven years; it was limited, on paper, to "forty hours per month" in November, 1903.

§ This must be untrue, for the simple reason that the Trading Companies possess the means of direct coercion.

† No such region exists, except on paper.

‡ The La Lulonga Society, which is situated in one of these paper regions, uses the same "methods of persuasion" as its neighbour, the A.B.I.R.

‖ All this is demonstrably in opposition to fact.

have established an influence, traces of which are to be found here and there even now.

M. Carton de Wiart:—Portuguese names have even been preserved in this region.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—M. Vandervelde protested with indignation because the natives are prevented from travelling outside their villages without authority from the District Commissioner. The honourable member saw in this measure an act of oppression, and he thinks, no doubt, that there is nothing like it in any other country which is being colonised. This is a double error, as the Commission of Inquiry remarked quite rightly, in regard to other matters in the passage of its Report, which I quoted a short while ago. One must be careful not to look upon such regulations with European ideas. To raise the moral and material level of the native, the colonising State is imbued with the principle that the natives cannot be left isolated in their natural surroundings. The tribe is the moral status of the native, the condition of his political and social development. Separated from his tribe, the native becomes a vagabond. It is, therefore, with the object of protecting him that the State seeks to maintain natural and traditional communities. Here, gentlemen, is a regulation which shows what severe penalties Nigeria applies to the violation of this necessary principle:—

"Any person wandering abroad, or having no apparent means of subsistence, may be arrested by any officer of any Court within the district in which such person is found, without a warrant, and brought before the Commissioner of such district, and questioned as to his means of subsistence, and to which House he belongs."

M. Masson:—What document are you reading?

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—It is a proclamation, dated 21st November, 1901, from the Laws of Southern Nigeria. Article 8 of that Proclamation reads as follows:—

"If it appears that he belongs to a House, notice shall be given to the head of such house, who may thereupon commence such proceedings as he may see fit under the proclamation, or under native law and custom. If the person arrested refuses, when questioned, to answer to the satisfaction of the Commissioner, and it does not appear that he belongs to a House, or if the head of the House to whom any notice of the arrest has been given as aforesaid, does not commence proceedings within seven days after the receipt of such notice, such person, unless he proves that he has sufficient means of subsistence, or that his want of such means is not the result of his own fault, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment with hard labour for any term not exceeding a year."

And further on the proclamation adds:—

"Every person who resists or obstructs the lawful apprehension of himself for any offence under this proclamation, or escapes or attempts to escape from any custody in which he is lawfully detained, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding one year, or to both."*

* M. de Smet de Naeyer reads into this proclamation an intention to prevent natives from freely moving about where their vocations call them, thereby seeking to justify similar practices enforced by the Congo State, and indicted by the Commission of Inquiry. It was framed with no such intention. The clause referred to by the Belgian Premier was aimed at the vagrant vagabond and marauder, who not only committed crime himself in order to live, but encouraged or offered opportunity for crime to others by his unprotected state, rendering himself liable to seizure and, possibly, sale as a slave, or even as a victim to human sacrifice. The House system is a purely native system, and membership of a House meant protection by the Heads of the House, lodging, board (probably), farm, etc., for the poorer members. The proclamation, far from committing an act of injustice, enforces the responsibility of the House, and protects the wandering criminal from seizure, and native social life from depredation.

If we realise the environment and the habits, as also the object which it is attempted to secure, it will be easily understood that regulations of this kind, far from being due to an idea of oppression and exploitation, are inspired by the thought that the native, separated from his tribe and from his village, is incapable of protecting himself, or providing for his needs.

M. DELPORTE:—They are condemned to hard labour to improve themselves!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You see, gentlemen, that the internal legislative system adopted by the Congo State is not different from that which other States apply to their colonies.

M. LORAND:—That is inaccurate. M. Cattier has shown that they are different.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—M. Cattier is one of those adversaries who, by a singular conception of things, only sees in the Congo enterprise matter for criticism.

M. LORAND:—But the question is, the facts admitted by the Commission.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—His work is not the work of an historian, or of an economist or sociologist, but of a pamphleteer.

M. LORAND:—This book is based upon the Report of the Commission of Inquiry; you have not destroyed a single one of the facts which he has brought forward.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I have characterised the general tendency of the book, and I shall show in a moment how the author deals with facts and figures. I should have liked to have extended further my demonstration, notably by examining the internal system adopted by other African Colonies, but interruptions have made me lose time, and it is late. As for the question of reforms.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You have quite a library.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Do you think it wrong that I should be well posted?

M. HYMANS:—If we approach the question of reforms to be brought about in the Congo, and the examination of all questions which may be germane to that issue, the discussion will last a long time.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Especially if we are going to discuss Nigeria and all the other possessions.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—If the discussion has developed in that way, M. Vandervelde and his friends can make it their *mea culpa*. The Government would have been justified in declining the interpellation, because, as I said before, it is an indictment against a Power which is not represented in this assembly.

M. BERTRAND:—You represent it so well! (Laughter on the extreme left.)

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —I take that for a compliment, and I thank you (laughter on the right). If we reply to the interpellation, it is because it is our duty as Belgians not to let unjust and passionate accusations against a work which will profit Belgium, pass without comment (applause on the right). If some find my speech too long, I can only regret it.

M. HYMANS: —Not at all. I am listening with much interest, but I say that this is an academic discussion.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —The discussion could have ended with the speech of my colleague for Foreign Affairs, if the terms of the interpellation had been adhered to.

M. DELPORTE: —You are replying to things which have not been said here.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —But we cannot, I admit, devote indefinitely our time to a matter that—in the way the question has been put—is not within our competence.

M. VANDERVELDE: —If there is anything in our competence it is the right to protest against such abuses.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —No criminal or oppressive act, no abuse of force or authority, will find defenders on the part of the Congo State, here or elsewhere. The Congo Government has given a complete proof of its intentions, and of its resolves, by instituting a Commission of Inquiry, followed by a Commission of Reforms. Gentlemen, I now come to the book of M. Cattier. I say that this book has been inspired either by hatred against the State, or without sufficient verification of figures and facts which it gives.

M. LORAND: —M. Cattier said certain things. You can refute them.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —It is not my business to refute the book from one end to the other, but I will show, by three examples, the credit which it deserves, for without it this interpellation would probably not have taken place.

M. LORAND: —The Report of the Commission was amply sufficient, and all M. Cattier has done is to throw light upon it.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —One need not be astonished that M. Vandervelde should have followed in the footsteps of M. Cattier, when one reads, in the preface to the book, special praise bestowed upon the author by M. Vandervelde for the energetic backing which he has given to the campaign organised against the administrative methods of the Congo (outcry on the extreme left).

M. VANDERVELDE: —It was an injustice towards my honourable friend, M. Lorand.

M. HOYOIS: —Two heads under the same bonnet (laughter).

M. VANDERVELDE: —What I am proud of, is having denounced, before the Parliament of my country, the abuses of Leopoldian colonisation.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I have replied in advance to that, by showing what Africa still is where the Congo State does not exercise its authority, after having shown what it has become, as the Commission of Inquiry itself admits, where the civilising influence of the Congo State has been exercised. I will therefore deal, gentlemen, with a few special points in M. Cattier's book. Speaking of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, M. Vandervelde quoted the figures of M. Cattier, to show that the revenue of the Domaine has produced up to now 70 millions. We shall see in a moment how exaggerated the figure is.

M. BERTRAND:—In that respect, one cannot have the figures, because they are not published.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Quite so.* But what is certain is that M. Cattier has exaggerated them at his own pleasure. At a sitting of the 3rd July, 1903, in this House, in the course of a discussion on an interpellation somewhat analogous to this one, I informed the House that the *Domaine de la Couronne* was an independent creation, moving outside the orbit of Governmental action of the Congo State, an institution managed by three administrators, who had agreed to act in conformity with the Decree drawn up by the Sovereign founder. This Decree was drawn up with high philanthropic, scientific and artistic ideas, and provided for the realisation of these ideas outside all intervention from the public powers.† The financial management of this Domaine, therefore, is not included in any official account.‡ But anyone who knows anything of geography and the trade of the Congo State can see for himself how exaggerated are the evaluations of M. Cattier. According to the latter, the rubber zone of the Congo covers an area of 1,026,875 kilometres square. Now the area of the zone where rubber is exploited is 2,105,100 kilometres square, because it should be noted that the rubber zone must not be confused with the forest zone, which M. Cattier seems to have taken as a basis. Root rubber, which grows in the plains in various districts, furnishes a *latex* which is as good as vine rubber, although mixed with impurities, which have not yet been entirely eliminated, and which causes it to lose part of its value. The two other items of the rule of three adopted by M. Cattier to estimate the yield of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, are also erroneous. The area of that Domaine is not 289,375 kilometres square, but 252,300 kilometres square, and the price of 7,000 francs, which the author adopts as an average profit per ton on rubber from 1896 to 1905, is too high by 2,500 to 3,000 francs at least. Moreover, it should

* M. de Smet de Naeyer admits that the figures are not published; in other words, the revenue drawn from a part of the Congo State, ten times the size of Belgium, called the *Domaine de la Couronne*, are not accounted for in the Congo State's Budgets. Yet M. de Cuvelier, King Leopold's Principal Secretary of State, did not hesitate to commit the following untruth, in print in an official memorandum sent round to all the Powers, including Great Britain, on the 17th September, 1903:—

"All the revenues of the Domaine are paid into the Treasury."

† Absolutism naked and unashamed.

‡ Until 1903 the existence of the *Domaine de la Couronne* was suppressed, and the world was led to believe that all the revenues derived from the taxation of the Congo natives were utilised to improving the Congo territory, whereas, in point of fact, a secret fund had existed, the revenues from which were utilised by King Leopold outside the Congo.

be noted that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has only been exploited as such since 1900. These errors corrected, one obtains, basing one's self upon M. Cattier, the figure of 18 millions, instead of 70 millions (outcry). That disposes of one of M. Cattier's points!*

M. BERTRAND:—Who gave you these figures?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I am not called upon to reply to that question (outcry on the left).

M. BERTRAND:—Are these figures official?

M. VANDERVELDE:—Will you allow me to ask you a question?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You have no right to ask me whence I obtain the information, which I produce here on my responsibility.

M. VANDERVELDE:—You take, then, responsibility for this figure of 18 millions?

M. BERTRAND:—Certainly, the Minister has just said so!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I say that, following the method of evaluation given by M. Cattier ("Oh, oh!" on the extreme left), but by basing one's self on accurate data, one arrives at the figure of 18,000,000 francs?†

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* The only thing it disposes of is the idea which might have been previously entertained that M. de Smet de Naeyer is cognisant either of Congo geography or Congo "trade." The Belgian Prime Minister says in the above passage that the total rubber-producing area of the Congo State is 2,015,100 kilometres square. Now the *total* area of the Congo State is only 2,300,000 kilometres square, from which, in order to arrive at the rubber-producing area, one must deduct the immense area covered by the finest fluvial district in the world, plus the non-producing rubber area, plus a portion of the rubber-producing area which King Leopold's rubber hunters are not yet exploiting, which is considerable. M. de Smet de Naeyer's figure is therefore grotesque. As for the difference of 37,075 kilometres square between the estimates of the area of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, it is a mere trifle, and who is likely to know more about it, M. Cattier, whose information coincides with that of the celebrated Belgian geographist, M. A. J. Wauters, or a mere bald statement, with no data to back it? As for M. de Smet de Naeyer's estimate of the profits per ton—again a mere statement with no corroborative data enabling one to judge of its probable accuracy—to discuss the matter adequately would entail a great deal of technical examination, out of place here. But from what I know of the profits of the great rubber Trusts of the Upper Congo, and from other reliable data, I consider M. Cattier's estimate of 7,000 francs well below the mark. Of course, if the expenditure of ammunition utilised in the course of the "forced labour" applied to acquire this rubber be taken into consideration, as a normal expenditure, it may be that M. Cattier's estimate would need a slight reduction. In the course of his 150-mile tramp of part of the Western portion of this royal demesne, Mr. Scrivener—the only white man who has set foot in this territory, apart from the Government's agents—found the expenditure of cartridges to have been so great that the whole population had disappeared, while His Britannic Majesty's Consul, quoting from the document of an official from the Eastern section of the royal demesne, was able to tell us that a consumption of 6,000 cartridges per month was not unusual in the process of "making rubber."

† The Belgian Prime Minister admits, therefore, that the Sovereign of the Congo State has appropriated 18 millions of francs from revenues drawn from the Congo territory, which he has not publicly accounted for. Be it noted, moreover, that this figure of 18 millions is slightly lower than the total value of the transactions in real estate in the *arrondissements* of only two Belgian cities, according to the official records of the Belgian Government, as published by M. Cattier!

M. VANDERVELDE:—Then you do not take the responsibility for this figure?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I am not called upon to establish before the House the revenue of the *Domaine de la Couronne*. But I take note of the errors of M. Cattier, and I say that he has been mistaken in the proportion of 18,000,000 to 70,000,000 francs.

M. DELPORTE:—Your figure is not an accurate figure. It is just as though you had said nothing.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—The House will certainly understand the significance of the demonstration I am making at this moment. I pass to another point. After having quoted certain properties belonging to the *Domaine de la Couronne*, in the *arrondissement* of Ostend, M. Cattier adds:—

"It seems, from official documents which have been submitted to me, that the Domaine is also the owner of real estate in a large number of other *arrondissements*, notably in the provinces of Brabant, Western Flanders, Namur, Luxembourg. The fact is very easy to verify . . . .

M. BERTRAND:—There may be such.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—And the fact; here it is. The *Domaine de la Couronne* only owns real estate in the province of Brabant, and in the *arrondissement* of Brussels, and in that of Louvain, where Tervueren is situated. In the Province of Western Flanders, the *Domaine de la Couronne* only owns real estate in the *arrondissement* of Ostend. Finally, the *Domaine de la Couronne* possesses no real estate in the other Provinces, notably in those of Namur and Luxembourg.

This disposes of M. Cattier's second point.

M. VANDERVELDE:—M. Cattier declared that it had been impossible for him to make an inquiry outside Brussels and Ostend, and he has shown that in those two cities 18,000,000 francs worth of real estate was inscribed in the name of the *Domaine de la Couronne*. This is not disputed.*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—M. Cattier was in too much of a hurry. He might have made his inquiry everywhere, because the registrar of the survey of lands is a public servant, and the registers of mortgages are public documents. He preferred to make a hazardous assertion, and this assertion is contrary to truth.†

M. LORAND:—The sum of 18 millions, net product of the Domaine, has therefore been exclusively utilised in buying real estate in Belgium.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Even in France!

M. LORAND:—And all the other extravagances at which we are assisting have been settled by loans with which the Congo is saddled.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You are free to indulge in all these insinuations. I leave you the responsibility for them.

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* And that is enough!

† Truth—*à la* Smet de Naeyer, which is a special and peculiar brand.

M. LORAND :—That is well understood.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—As far as I am concerned, what I have to do at the present moment is to prove the frivolous character of M. Cattier's book.

M. VANDERVELDE :—If that is your object, you would be much better employed in giving us positive data.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—In view of the errors which I have just pointed out, we may well be amazed to see the irresponsibility with which M. Cattier has flung the charges which you know against the Congo State and its Sovereign, charges which MM. Lorand and Vandervelde have endorsed before Parliament.

M. LORAND :—I confined myself to quoting the Report of the Commission of Inquiry.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—Yes, but you did so with more cleverness than sincerity (outcry on the extreme left). Leaving out essential pages.

M. LORAND :—I utilised what the Report recognises.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—You have read out carefully-selected passages.

M. LORAND :—And you confine yourself to reading out its rhetorical flowers, and do not attempt to dispute the facts which I brought before the House, and which are in the Report.

M. VANDERVELDE :—Your methods of debate are lacking in courtesy.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—The word "courtesy," used by you at the present moment, has a strange sound, after your long diatribes against absent parties.

M. LORAND :—But this is quite inaccurate ; I cited facts, which were not disputed, and to which you have not replied.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—No one can have mistaken your tone of acrimony, and your lack of the spirit of justice.

M. VANDERVELDE :—The House will recognise that I was courteous.

M. LORAND :—I quoted the admissions of the Report of the Commission.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER :—I have several times rendered homage to the ability with which M. Vandervelde develops arguments, which I am often called upon to oppose, and the same has been the case to-day. But no one will deny that he has formulated here charges against absent parties, charges of the utmost gravity, the proof of which has not been brought.

M. LORAND :—Pardon. Which ones? I have quoted the admissions of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. You do not dispute them. Then what are you complaining about?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You have quoted chosen passages from the Report of the Commission, in order to make out, from errors in application, and individual faults, an alleged system of barbarous oppression and slavish exploitation.

M. LORAND:—What is the fact which I have stated which you dispute?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I have said, and I repeat, that I do not dispute the positive fact of abuses and excesses, but I have proved . . . .

M. LORAND:—Nothing at all!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:— . . . by quoting the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, that it is just to render homage to the grandiose work accomplished in the Congo in the last twenty-five years.

M. LORAND:—The Commission found that massacre, pillage, and incendiarism are the result of the system of exploitation in existence in the Congo.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You continue obstinately to generalise, despite all reason and justice . . . .

M. LORAND:—No, no.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:— . . . and you are trying to prove that reprehensible acts, which are only individual errors,* are a system.

M. LORAND:—No; they have been found by the Commission of Inquiry to be the result of the outrageous system of exploitation practised by the Congo State.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—If M. Lorand were sent to inquire into the Charleroi country, and took note of the exploits of the *Longues Pennes*, would one conclude from his report that the whole of Belgium was a country of savages?

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* Is it an individual error for a so-called Government to violate its own laws, and impose forced labour, unlimited by time, upon its subjects for eleven years? Is it an individual error for a Government, suddenly, on the brink of being exposed for this illegality, to draft a law making legal forced labour for forty hours a month, knowing full well that its financial collapse would follow the application of so restricted a measure of coercion? Is it an individual error for a Government to declare in official circulars that the revenues derived from the labour of its subjects must show a "progressive increase," under the forty hours law, over the revenues formerly obtained when that enforced labour was unlimited by time? Is it an individual error for a Government to issue secret circulars, offering bonuses to its agents on rubber, ivory and men, under conditions providing a direct incentive to atrocity? Is it an individual error for a Governor-General, and District Commissioners, to authorise the taking of hostages to coerce the people into producing greater quantities of rubber? Is it an individual error for a Government to issue fraudulent balance sheets? Is it an individual error for a Government to declare that all the revenues derived by it from the enforced labour imposed upon its people are paid into its Treasury, when its Sovereign has been secretly appropriating millions from those revenues for years? Is it an individual error for a Government to appropriate the land and the products of the land of a territory 800,000 square miles in extent, expropriating 15 millions of human beings therefrom, and converting them into slaves?

M. LORAND:—But our receivers of taxes, and our police officers, are not *Longues Pennes.*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Who is speaking of taxes and police officers? You denounced inhuman acts, committed in a country which is only on the threshold of civilisation, and one need not go far to find savage acts in a civilised country.

M. LORAND:—But not committed by officials.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—If the exploits of the "longues pennes" do not prove that our peasants are a pack of brigands, abuses committed by certain agents of the State or of the commercial companies do not prove that cruelty and rapine are erected into a system!

I come, gentlemen, to a third error of M. Cattier's. The assertion of my colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the net product of the loan on the lottery system, estimated by M. Cattier at 50 millions, was not more than seven or eight millions, has been contested. Proof of it, however, is to be found in the letter which M. Van Eetvelde addressed to me in February, 1895.* The Secretary of State of the Congo State informed me in this communication that the Congo Government had just issued 211,875 bonds for this Loan, and that in case of annexation the Government of the Congo State would have to remit to the Belgian Government the sum of 1,415,780·51 francs, or about 6·65 francs per bond. That was the net profit left from the issue per bond on this Loan, after payment to the guarantee fund, payment of commissions to intermediaries, and deduction of divers expenses. Up to date, 900,000 bonds have been issued. The mean profit may be estimated at 7 francs per bond. The total profit acquired by the State amounts to 6,300,000 francs, instead of 50 millions (laughter on the right). Here is an error which is on all fours with that with which I dealt a moment ago on the subject of the *Domaine de la Couronne.* The sum of 2,922,000 francs, inscribed in the Budget for the service of the debt, comprises 2,540,555 francs for interest, the surplus consisting of charges on the sinking fund account, and expenditure estimates. This interest corresponds to a nominal capital of 67,432,000 francs, the amount of the issued bonds.

M. BERTRAND:—A year ago you said 41 millions. Since then, therefore, 26 additional millions have been borrowed. To what purposes have they been utilised?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You will not lure me into discussing the management of the finances of the Congo State . . . .

M. BERTRAND:—I merely note that a year ago you spoke of a debt of 41 millions, and that the debt is now one of 67 millions.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I am dealing at the moment with M. Cattier's errors, and the House will realise that it is a for-

* Eleven years before! Fancy, moreover, going to M. Van Eetvelde for truth; the very gentleman who denied, in a diplomatic correspondence exchanged with Count Alvensleben, the German Minister at Brussels, that any bonuses were being paid to agents of the State on rubber and ivory!

midable task (laughter). I take again, therefore, the figure I have just quoted. That figure is 67,432,200 francs. In the sitting of February 28th, 1905, I told M. Bertrand that he was mixing up the nominal capital of the loans with the effective yield. Thus the 30 millions at 3 per cent. only produced 22 millions, or a difference of 8 millions, which reduces the product of this debt to 59,400,000 francs; adding thereto the sum derived from the lottery loan of 6,300,000 francs, we arrive at the figure of 65,700,000 francs, received by the State from the bonds issued; the ordinary deficits of the State Budgets amount to 27,000,000 francs. There remains a sum of 38,700,000 francs, instead of the 103 millions of which M. Cattier speaks (outcry on the right). So much for the third point. And we are asked to give faith to a work written with such inaccuracy, and with such a contempt for truth. We refuse to associate ourselves with such views* (applause on the right).

M. Bertrand:—Let the Congo State then publish its accounts as it publishes its Budgets.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—The hour is getting late, and I ask to be allowed to continue to-morrow. (Assent.)

M. Vandervelde:—I ask to be heard, to ventilate a personal matter.

The Speaker:—M. Vandervelde is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Vandervelde.

M. Vandervelde:—Gentlemen, in the course of his speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer read out a number of notes, which I must confess have given me the impression of having been drawn up in the offices of a foreign State (laughter on the left and extreme left). One of these notes alleged that M. Vandervelde had referred to Belgian officials placed at the disposal of the Congo State, merely "to formulate a charge against a magistrate and vice-consul, which the protests of the accused parties had immediately disposed of." I at once drew attention to this statement of the Minister's, which is altogether inaccurate. In the course of my interpellation, I recalled that M. Cattier, in his book, said that a portion of the revenues of the *Domaine de la Couronne* had been employed in subsidising a Press Bureau, where special pleadings were concocted in favour of the Congo State. To emphasise the statement of M. Cattier, I revealed, and the fact has not been denied, that one of the newspapers of the capital had received 500 francs per month from the Congo State. When I brought this forward, the Minister for Justice sought to make me say that these funds had been distributed by the head of the Press Bureau—that is to say, by a magistrate, and afterwards by a vice-consul. I absolutely declined to make such an assertion, for the simple reason that I was ignorant, at the time, who were the people who had actually distributed these funds to the Press.

* The reader is referred to M. Vandervelde's speech in the course of the fourth day's debate.

What I declared was that at the head of the Press Bureau, whose mission was the concoction of special pleadings on behalf of the Congo State, was placed, first a magistrate paid by the Belgian Government, and later on a vice-consul on sick leave, who continued to draw a salary from the Belgian Government. No one has denied these facts; consequently, everything which I have said, I maintain. On the one hand, we note that subsidies are paid to the Press. On the other hand, we note this fact, which I consider profoundly to be deplored, that Belgian officials have been placed at the disposal of the Congo State, while being paid by Belgium, to draw up special pleadings in favour of a foreign State. That is what I had to say, and nothing that I have said has been disposed of by the interested parties.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I limited myself to showing that M. Vandervelde, after having announced an interpellation, which was to have constituted a juridical criticism, had entirely gone outside his programme, and that he had, notably, not concluded by demanding the withdrawal of the authority granted to Belgian officials to help the Congo State. I noted in addition that two officials, accused by M. Vandervelde, had immediately protested against certain imputations, of which they had thought themselves the object.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Pardon me, you said . . . .

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Read the shorthand notes.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Certainly. I have just read them. This is what they say:—

"If M. Vandervelde spoke of Belgian officials placed at the disposal of the Congo State, it was merely to formulate a charge against a magistrate and a vice-consul, which the protests of the interested parties immediately disposed of."

Now, the only charge I brought against these gentlemen was of having directed a Press Bureau while receiving payment from the Belgian Government. The Government has not denied that, and therefore I fail to understand your meaning when you assert that my charges have been disposed of.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—If I was led to refer to these officials, it was to make clear that no blamable circumstance could be imputed to them.

M. VANDERVELDE:—If that was the meaning of your language, the personal incident exists no longer.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Moreover, I attach very small importance to the incident, which has been settled between M. Vandervelde and my colleagues for Foreign Affairs and for Justice. But I must add that there is a way of saddling people with an unpleasant charge, without directly imputing it.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Pardon me. I cannot allow you to say that.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—When persons are accused, the accusation should be formulated in precise terms.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I ask to be heard.

M. DE FAVEREAU : —The Hon. M. Vandervelde has just repeated the charges he made. Acts of corruption had been carried on with a newspaper of the capital, and immediately afterwards he spoke of the part played by the Press Bureau. The persons who heard him might have the impression that there was a close connection of cause and effect between the two statements. Yesterday, my colleague for Justice read you the letter from M. Rolin, and I read you the letter from M. Goffart; then M. Vandervelde recognised that he had had no intention of imputing to M. Rolin or to M. Goffart participation of any kind in an act of corruption.

M. VANDERVELDE : —What I did was to repeat my former observations.

M. DE FAVEREAU : —Moreover, the statement of the hon. member was drawn from the book of M. Cattier, and hon. members will have read M. Cattier's letter in the *Indépendance Belge*, in which M. Cattier denies that he had it in mind to suspect the two officials of having been mixed up in any way in the act denounced.

M. VANDERVELDE : —Gentlemen, if I insist once more upon this incident, it is because, after having withdrawn from it any personal character, the Minister closed with a charge which wounds me greatly, and which consists in stating that, not daring to affirm certain things, I insinuated them . . . .

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER : —I confined myself to reproducing an impression which might have been formed by hearing and reading your words.

M. VANDERVELDE : —Now, what took place? I followed the order which I found in M. Cattier's book, and I spoke successively of the Press Bureau, and of subsidies to Belgian and foreign newspapers. If I was not understood, it is not my fault, but the fault of listeners who appear inclined to wish to impute to me unfriendly intentions. I am sufficiently concerned, in the course of the discussions in which I participate, to use loyalty in my statements, not to attach more importance than it deserves to the charge of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

THE SPEAKER : —The incident is closed.

FOURTH DAY'S DEBATE (March 1st).

SPEECHES BY

M. BEERNAERT *(Ex-Minister of State).*

M. CARTON DE WIART *(Catholic, brother of the King's Private Secretary).*

M. VANDERVELDE *(Leader of the Labour Party).*

M. MASSON *(Liberal).*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER *(Premier, Minister of the Interior and Chancellor of the Exchequer).*

M. HYMANS *(Liberal).*

DE HEER P. DAENS *(Independent Catholic).*

M. HELLEPUTTE *(Catholic).*

M. COLFS *(Catholic)*, AND OTHERS.

THE SPEAKER:—We resume, gentlemen, M. Vandervelde's interpellation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is in command of the House.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I abstain from speaking at the present moment, reserving myself for later on, after the House has heard other speakers.

THE SPEAKER:—M. Beernaert is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Beernaert.

M. BEERNAERT:—Gentlemen, I am only speaking in order to justify my Resolution. I shall do so in a few words, because the discussion which has been opened does not appear to me to be calculated to bring about any positive solution. I need hardly recall all my reasons for being greatly interested in the Congo enterprise. I gave it my support at a time when the King was practically confronted with sceptics. It is I who asked Parliament to vote the necessary authority for the fusion of the two crowns. I obtained, in favour of the Stanley Pool Railway, the intervention of the Belgian Treasury. I got Parliament to approve unanimously, with one exception, and with the eloquent assistance of M. Janson, of the Convention of the 3rd July, 1890, which, conditional with financial help, assured us the right of taking over the Congo, together with useful control. A little later, the revised Constitution prepared the legal way for annexation. Finally, as you know, I took, in 1901, with a few friends, the initiative of a projected law providing for the immediate exercise of the right of annexing the Congo, which right Belgium then possessed. In 1895, before the time agreed upon, the same initiative had been taken in the name of the Government, by Count de Merode Westerloo, but this projected law was withdrawn, and when the Convention expired, the Government of that day showed itself hesitating, almost hostile.

Hence, gentlemen, our proposal for annexation, which we only abandoned when faced by the refusal of all help, not only from the Belgian State, but also and especially from the Congo State, a refusal accentuated again by the letter which M. Woeste thought it advisable to recall to you yesterday.

Those, gentlemen, are pages in our contemporary history which have a very powerful interest for me. But this is not the time to recall these events. Belgium to-day has no right whatever to take over the Congo, and it is deliberately, voluntarily, but against my wishes, that she renounced that right under the form of an ill-defined adjournment. Freely also, and after examination, did Parliament renounce all control and all demand for information, which the preceding Convention assured to our country, and gave to the Congo State its full liberty of management and borrowing powers. These are matters which we may regret, and I need hardly tell the House that this is my personal feeling. But we are face to face with accomplished facts. In 1895, the Government, not altogether in agreement with itself, retreated before a badly-prepared Public Opinion, and notably before the furious opposition of the Socialist Party to all colonial policy. In 1901 we were faced with insurmountable difficulties, for the Congo State refused any prolongation, however temporary, of the existing *régime*, and absolutely nothing had been prepared in Belgium with a view to annexation. Once more, again, these are facts, and it is useless to discuss them. We must take the situation as we find it, but, after the long debate to which this interpellation has given rise, can we keep silent, and could we even admit a pure and simple Order of the Day? I do not think so. There are too many common interests, too many links of all kinds, past sacrifices, present pre-occupations, future prospects, between Belgium and the Congo. Hence my Resolution, and it seems to me of a nature to obtain large support. There is one point, I think, upon which we are all agreed, and that is the necessity of elaborating the projected organic law to settle the administration of the future Belgian Colony in case of annexation. Indeed, M. Vandervelde, who to-day is less hostile to the colonial idea than he was previously, admits it. The Resolution proposed by M. Masson and his friends accentuates this desire, in terms almost analogous with those which I myself have used. And how could the Government resist it, when it is its own proposal which we ask Parliament to examine without further delay? Urgency for the proposal of the 7th August, 1901, was fully justified. It was stated in the preamble of that proposal that it is highly desirable that no uncertainty should exist as to the *régime* to which the future Belgian Colony will be submitted, ensuring the transitional period between the present union and annexation being carried on without difficulties or friction. On the other hand, the Chamber of Commerce of Antwerp, and others, expressed the wish to see this organic law elaborated without delay, and how was it possible not to have insisted upon it since it was due to the absence of such a law that the immediate annexation of the Congo had been set aside? Such, gentlemen, was the language held in 1901, but five years have passed, without any attempt having been made to grapple with this work, the urgency of which had been proclaimed. Neither the Government

nor the Chambers have breathed a word with regard to it. Here, again, I do not wish to quarrel with the past. But at least we are unanimous, I think, in considering that these delays have been more than sufficient; that it is necessary to put an end to them; and that the Constitution, having provided for the acquisition of Colonies with a special *régime*, it is essential to settle the latter as soon as possible by determining the conditions under which such Colonies shall be administered and financially organised.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —That is absolutely the opinion of the Government.

M. BEERNAERT: —I am happy to hear you say so, but perhaps you might have acted before.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —If any complaints are to be made on that score, they should be made, not against the Government, but against the House, because the difficulty of passing laws, whose urgency everyone agrees to, must be borne in mind.

M. BEERNAERT: —The House might, indeed, have asked for news of the proposed law, which has remained in its pigeon holes; but the forgetfulness of its authors is perhaps more curious. However that may be, I do not wish to reproach anyone, but here again let me emphasise the fact that we are all unanimous on this point, Socialists, Liberals, Catholics and Government; we all urge that the examination of an organic law for the colonies shall no longer be delayed. If the work of the House does not enable it to discuss the matter this session, which is now almost closed, it should be one of its earliest pre-occupations in Autumn. I pass, gentlemen, to my Resolution, properly so-called, and I think that it also deserves the approval of this assembly. Even looked at from a distance, the work of the King in Africa appears gigantic, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer said with truth that it was unjust not to recognise that it has contributed powerfully to awaken a spirit of enterprise, industrial activity, taste for distant expeditions and business in Belgium. That was, gentlemen, and I think it necessary to repeat it, a very great service rendered to the country. When this conception, which then appeared almost risky, was submitted to the Conference at Berlin, it was appreciated as it deserved to be, and the Protocols of that assembly are inspired with the most generous and philanthropic spirit. To carry out his views, the King had the good fortune to find in the army, amongst the clergy, amongst those missionaries of whom M. Verhaegen has spoken to you so eloquently, and also amongst administrators and men of science, devotion both striking and obscure, to which we have not, perhaps, always given a sufficiency of praise. Well, gentlemen, when in the opening words of my Resolution, I ask you to applaud once more the grandeur of the conception, the liberal and generous spirit with which the Congo was admitted into the family of nations, the numberless sacrifices of all kinds which have been made for it, even of life itself, am I not entitled to rely upon your universal approval? (General assent.)

But, in the course of the last few years, grave divergencies have arisen in the vast basin of Central Africa, notably as regards the organisation of property, of labour, and of taxation, and on

this subject fierce polemics have taken place in Belgium and elsewhere. Much might be said on this subject, and if we were called upon now to discuss these questions, there is more than one point upon which I should find myself compelled to differ from the opinions given here yesterday by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I could not, for instance, agree with what he said with regard to forced labour, a system which so easily leads back to slavery under a new form, from which it differs but little (applause on the left and on the extreme left). It is true that we have seen some of our writers declare that the negro is barely a man, and that the negress is only cattle! (Outcry.)

M. Janson:—These views have no echo in the country (applause on the opposition benches). These ideas contain their own refutation, and do not redound to the honour of those who put them forward (applause on the same benches).

M. Beernaert:—I am not astonished to hear M. Janson express in this matter an opinion similar to mine. Yes, certainly these sentiments find no echo in our country, but in reading them one is conscious of the most painful and the most detestable impression (applause on the same benches). One asks one's self how it can be possible that, after nineteen centuries of Christianity, arguments can be revived which thinkers already found intolerable before Christianity appeared in the world (loud applause).

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—These arguments have never found defenders in Parliament.*

M. Beernaert:—I am convinced of it, and it was good to make it plain. Apart from these questions of principle, grave abuses have been committed, and not only in the Congo, nor even in Africa only, but nearly everywhere where colonies exist.

M. Janson:—That is true.

M. Beernaert:—And one must acknowledge with sorrow, but with truth, that the European, in playing the part of civiliser, which he attributes and confers upon himself, is not always very pleasant to look upon (applause on many benches). In the Congo, apart from the administrative system existing, the abuses were facilitated by the enormous territory and the distances. But the State wished to find out matters for itself. Hence the formation of the Commission of Inquiry, the impartiality of which cannot be doubted. The Report of that Commission is in your hands, and assuredly you have all read that very grave document. It is not denied that important reforms must result from it, and these are being studied. We are told that the work of this second Commission is ended, and that its Report will be published immediately.† Under these conditions, is it possible for the Belgian House, being insufficiently informed, to profess to substitute its views for those of the Commissioners who have been on the spot?

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* "The native is entitled to nothing. What is given him is a pure gratuity."—M. de Smet de Naeyer in the Belgian House, 1903.

† A promise, like so many others from the same quarter, which has not been fulfilled.

Is it admissible that we should criticise and discuss the proposals of the Commission for Reforms, which we do not even know? This would be absolutely inadmissible, the more so as we do not possess the necessary details, for we have renounced the right of demanding them. We can no longer obtain accounts or information of any kind, and, notwithstanding our triple position of presumptive heirs, furnishers of men and money, and creditors, we are, from the juridical point of view, in exactly the same situation towards the Congo as the other States represented at the Conference of Berlin.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—That is quite accurate.

M. BEERNAERT:—Alas! I think, therefore, that we must await the proposals which have been announced, and especially the carrying out of these proposals, which I hope will be at once executed. That was the opinion expressed by the Washington Cabinet the other day, and the new London Cabinet, replying to an English deputation on African matters, held the same language. But if we must wait, I think it is useful that Parliament should now applaud the spirit which animated the Commission of Inquiry, and that Parliament should encourage the Commission of Reforms, and that would certainly not mean, as M. Colfs seems to think, an approval of everything which has taken place on the Congo. No one here thinks of giving such approval, neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer nor any of our colleagues. What I praise, gentlemen, and what I ask you to praise, is the announcement made of necessary reforms, and the examination in regard to which is taking place. I do not think we need go further. This, however, is what M. Vandervelde proposes. Without bringing his speech to any very definite conclusion, he expressed the wish to see the House organise on its own account a Parliamentary Inquiry, with the object of studying the necessary measures to ensure the preservation of the native peoples, and the amelioration of their conditions of existence; as also of the financial consequences for Belgium which would ensue if the Congo State became a Belgian Colony. I ask on what ground could we organise such investigations, and by virtue of what authority could we demand information which we formally renounced by the much-to-be-regretted vote I referred to a few moments ago. How could the Belgian State put forward such demands in regard to a State which is acting in its full independence? It would leave itself open to a refusal, in the face of which no retort could be given. The Hon. M. Vandervelde, who a short while ago was hostile to all idea of colonial expansion, cannot wish, assuredly, that we should consider to-day annexation in the light of an accomplished fact. Similar objections appear to me to set aside in certain respects the Resolution proposed by M. Masson and his friends. Here again, gentlemen, my opinion is that we should go beyond that which we can do, beyond . . . .

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—This is obvious.

M. BEERNAERT:— . . . Beyond what our juridical situation permits of. I think, on the contrary, that the wording of the Resolution I propose is sheltered from similar criticisms, and I think I may, therefore, submit it with confidence to the approval of the House (applause on numerous benches).

M. Colfs:—I demand to be heard, to present a Resolution.

The Speaker:—You are in command of the House.

Resolution by M. Colfs.

M. Colfs:—Gentlemen, confirming the conclusions of my speech of yesterday, and in order to obtain a Resolution which does not go beyond juridical rights recognised to Belgium, such as they have just been defined by M. Beernaert, I have the honour to propose the following Resolution:—

"The Chamber, considering that grave abuses take place in the Congo; considering that, notwithstanding reiterated promises, they have not been remedied; considering that it results from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, that, 'officers commanding expeditions against natives have thought themselves at war, have acted as though they were at war, and that that was, moreover, the intention of their chiefs,' without the superior authorities having even dissuaded them from doing so; calls upon the Government to suspend the authorisation to Belgian officers to go to the Congo, until a new state of affairs has been inaugurated, compatible with the dignity of the Belgian Army, and passes to the Order of the Day."

The Speaker:—M. Carton de Wiart is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Carton de Wiart.

M. Carton de Wiart:—Gentlemen, if the only matter at stake here was the Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert, I should hesitate to intervene in the discussion after the authoritative speech to which we have just listened, but there are other matters. There is the interpellation itself; there is the book which gave rise to it; there are the comments upon that book, and upon the Report itself, which have been made by M. Vandervelde and other speakers.

M. Vandervelde:—The Report of the Commission was the motive of the interpellation.

M. Carton de Wiart:—There is also the echo which these comments have had, or may have had, here, and elsewhere, in the country, and outside the country; outside, in encouraging, perhaps, certain jealousies, and a certain covetousness—which is always on the look-out, and which does not conduce to the interest either of the Congo enterprise or of Belgium herself; here, at home, in discouraging the marvellous effort which induces a large number of our citizens, especially among the coming generation, to extend their studies, to push their energies far beyond the traditional area of our expansion, beyond our frontiers, beyond the seas, in order to ensure to our overwhelming activity the conquest of new markets. From that point of view, gentlemen, I think it is not sufficient to say, as we all say, that there is something to be reformed on the Congo. It is not sufficient to state that this immense country has reached a degree of development which allows it, which compels it even, to give greater heed to views which would have been impossible of thorough application during the period of the State's organisation. We are all agreed on this point, and the speech of

the Hon. M. Beernaert has demonstrated the fact, following the speeches of M. Woeste and that of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. But there are two ways of pointing out abuses, two ways of demanding reforms, two ways of satisfying complaints. When one discovers an error or a weakness in a person in whom one is interested, in an enterprise which one loves, and which one sincerely wishes to prosper, one points out the abuses, no doubt, but one is grieved about them, and one does not exaggerate them.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Precisely.

M. CARTON DE WIART:—On the contrary, when one discovers a weakness in an adversary, or in an enterprise which one systematically abuses, one triumphs over that abuse; one gives way easily to the temptation of overwhelming the adversary under the weight of his fault, after having exaggerated its gravity. Now this is what I ask the interpellator. Is your intervention brought about by the wish to ensure the preservation and the progress of a Belgian colonial enterprise? Are you attacking the fault, or are you attacking the patient? Is it the fault or is it the patient whom you wish to disappear? We have the right to know it, and to find it out (applause on the right).

M. BERTRAND:—Ask M. Colfs!

M. NEUJEAN:—Is there, then, a patient?

M. CARTON DE WIART:—And I affirm that M. Vandervelde is playing to the gallery. He spoke with decency, almost with praise, of our missionaries. Almost, thanks to his habitual ability, he would have allowed us to believe that interest in Belgian colonisation alone inspired him, and when I listened to his measured language, I recalled the pretty fable of the wolf who became shepherd (laughter on the right).

It is well, however, that your policy should be recalled (and the Hon. M. Beernaert has just made an opportune allusion to it), so that neither here nor abroad shall anyone be misled as to the authority which attaches to your words. It is well that it should be known that your programme, your manifestoes, and your past, are systematically condemnatory of colonisation. The Socialist Congress of London in 1896 condemned it in these words:—

"The Congress declares that whatever may be the religious or so-called civilising pretext of colonial policy, it is but the extension of capitalistic exploits in the exclusive interest of the capitalist classes."

More recently, in the midst of this Assembly, an interesting debate was brought about by the proposal for a Belgian expedition to China, after the Boxer insurrection. On that occasion, a member of the extreme left, M. Allard, rose and solemnly declared—this was on the 11th December, 1900—"As for us, we shall always combat colonial policy with vigour and with energy, either in Africa or in Asia," and the shorthand reports mention "applause on the Socialist benches." The day before yesterday, when M. Woeste, at the close of his speech, sought to encourage all those whose devotion and activity are enlisted on behalf of the Congo enterprise, a member of the Socialist left interrupted him, saying, "What will the missionaries say to these encouragements?"

That member was M. Allard. Gentlemen, I admire and I respect the Congo missionaries. I have among them more than one friend. I am honoured to have had as Professor the Rev. Father Cus, who has been mentioned in this debate. This large-hearted man, this apostle, after having been the most active organiser of our agricultural co-operative movement, which regenerated the Luxembourg, devoted his life in India, and then in the Congo, to the service of Christian colonisation. But I cannot help smiling, and I am convinced that if the missionaries read our debates, they will have the same feeling, to note the unexpected interest manifested towards them by the Socialist left. In 1900, in the course of the discussion which took place here after the massacres of Manchuria, when Monsignor Hanner had been murdered, flayed, and finally burnt in Mongolia, with other missionaries, belonging principally to the Scheut Mission (who thus paid with their lives for their devotion to civilisation), was a word of sympathy uttered from your benches to these heroes? No. At that moment, M. Allard was content to denounce the enterprise of missionaries of all denominations as an intolerant, aggressive and unhappy propaganda, backed up by diplomatic and militarv action, a perpetual source of conflicts, and generator of hatred. And each time that there has been a question of our expansion in distant lands, of what may be termed the Belgian problem *par excellence*, whose solution interests so closely the lot of our laborious population, in an industrial country where seven million inhabitants are packed in less than three millions of *hectares*, what has been your attitude? One of the first oratorical manifestations of the Socialist Party in this House consisted in demanding the suppression of our diplomatic representation (which is considered on the benches of the extreme left as merely decorative, and as a pretext for ostentation). When the Government consented to send abroad a few Belgian officers to study or to prepare the way for Belgian enterprise, with what vigour did you not protest, as if, in truth, these officers, sent temporarily to the Far East, to Persia, or to South America, were robbing the Belgian Treasury by the few thousands of francs which their salaries represent, as if, in thus helping us to open up new markets, they were not giving as many, and perhaps more services, to the country than if they were stationed in their garrisons. And when a few of us argued on these benches in favour of the development of our merchant marine, how were those arguments received on the extreme left? They were met with criticism and scorn, or with charges of servility. But to-day there are no more attacks, either against the missionaries or against the principle of colonisation. Nay, do I not find the signature of the Hon. M. Vandervelde at the foot of the Resolution proposed by M. Masson, which expresses the desire: —

"That the Central Committee should be called together without delay, in order to examine the projected law of the 7th August, 1901, on the government of the Colonial possessions of Belgium."

What are we to understand by this? Here you are associating yourselves with a movement calculated to hasten, by preparing it, that very annexation which you have always fought.* Do you

* The intolerable scandals of the Congo, and the way in which they have compromised, and are compromising, the Belgian name abroad, have led M. Vandervelde and some other Socialists to consider that even annexation would be a lesser evil than the present state of affairs.

at last feel that Public Opinion is not with you, that notwithstanding your campaign, however vehement, the nation is definitely familiarised with the idea of a Belgian Congo? Do you feel that the country is won over to this enterprise, that it realises that out there under the Equator is a country eighty times the size of Belgium, but on which some of Belgium's personality has been grafted?§ Do you at last realise that this enterprise, brought about by the persevering genius of the Sovereign, and in which so many of our sons, Statesmen, missionaries, engineers, explorers, officers have laboured, and often sacrificed their lives, that this work, I say, Belgium intends shall remain Belgian, and that Public Opinion will be as resolute to protect it against internal abuse as against external attacks, wherever they may come from? (Applause on the right.) If it was in this spirit that you brought forward your interpellation, and signed the Resolution of M. Masson, I shall rejoice. Then would this assembly, notwithstanding party differences, vibrate with a common feeling. But this is not how you have acted up to the present. You are not even arguing and acting in this sense to-day. What was your speech? A systematic quintessence of the attacks formulated against the Congo State for some years past. The marvellous development of the Congo State, its actual riches, those which it is supposed to hold in the future, have given birth to jealousies.* Criticism has been violent. We measure the grandeur of the work by the attacks which it provokes, as we measure the height of an edifice by the shadow which it throws upon the ground. At the same time undeniable abuses, which are the ordinary and fatal accompaniment, it would seem, of the seizure by European nations of new territory, have provoked sympathy, which I think sincere, with the native population. Interests of a political or mercantile order have helped sentimental sympathies. These interests find therein a double profit. As it has been said, "Their good first and then the evil of others."‖ These attacks—in which good faith and more or less impractical sentimentality are mixed up with ambitions of quite another character, which have notably increased as the prosperity of the State has increased†—these attacks you have welcomed with the same warmth, and the same ardour, and the same enthusiasm. One reserve, however. M. Vandervelde, speaking on the 19th March, 1903, on the Burrows' disclosures, which had just taken place, and which were provoking a great sensation,‡ said:—

"I cannot help adding that I have been profoundly moved by certain of their statements, and by the documents which they produce."

And, on the strength of Burrows' statement, the Hon. M. Vandervelde enumerated a series of horrors which one might have

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§ For the honour of Belgium, it has been the personality, not of her people, but of her King, which has been "grafted" on the Congo.

* On whose part? To be jealous of the Congo is to be jealous of a revolting enterprise, jealous of riches acquired by the slaughter and misery of innumerable natives. If the Congo State's critics were imbued with a hatred of Belgium, they would rejoice in the thought of the future nemesis which probably awaits her.

‖ What interests?

† The beneficiaries from the slave labour of the Congo people are alone prosperous. The Congo territory is becoming rapidly impoverished.

‡ They provoked no sensation in England.

thought borrowed from the *Jardin des Supplices* of Octave Mirbeau.* Then he added, having reproduced them, that "We must wait the decision of the English judges" before pronouncing on the value of these charges. The decision of the English judges came. It was overwhelming for the forger and the calumniator, and what did M. Vandervelde then say? You heard him on Tuesday: —

"We asked ourselves"—he insinuated—"if this publication was not a trap, and if the Congo State had not itself raised up an adversary so easily confounded."

This, gentlemen, is Socialist mentality taken *sur le vif!*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —Very good.

M. CARTON DE WIART: —What! A blackmailer attacks our officers, and others of our citizens; these charges are reproduced with some reserve since they have come before the Courts; he is condemned by the Courts of his own country; thereupon, because the Congo enterprise must be always, and notwithstanding everything, attacked, the accuser becomes an *agent provocateur*, and his infamy is used as a new weapon against the Congo State (outcry on the extreme left).

M. VANDERVELDE: —I declared to the House on the very first day that the book of Burrows seemed to me to be suspicious.

M. CARTON DE WIART: —You made the reserves which I have recalled to-day. To-day you say that Burrows was an *agent provocateur*. Moreover, that is your method. Each time that an excess places you in a position of embarrassment, each time that one of your auxiliaries goes too far, he is an *agent provocateur* (applause on the right). But, before launching such ignominious charges against the State, would it not be better to sample them at least by a beginning of proof?

M. LORAND: —All we have done has been to quote from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —You have falsified its spirit (protests on the extreme left).

M. LORAND: —It would be impossible for you to deny the facts pointed out and admitted by the Commission. Thus you are pleading on one side.

M. CARTON DE WIART: —I know. We plead on one side each time we reply to you!

M. VANDERVELDE: —We know only too well that *agents provocateurs* exist elsewhere than in our imagination.

M. CARTON DE WIART: —They are chiefly the products of your imagination (applause on the right).

M. LORAND: —But there have been some. Remember Pourbaix.

* They pale beside the revelations produced before the Congo Commission of Inquiry, which the Congo Government has not dared to publish.

M. Carton de Wiart:—If you wish to discuss that matter once more, around which you sought to create a legend, we can do so in due time and place.

M. Lorand:—Everybody remembers Pourbaix, and the Mons trial. Discussion took place here on that subject, and it was then said that in those events a certain Minister had been tarnished.

M. Janson:—You would be much better employed in replying to the charges contained in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, instead of making speeches which have nothing to do with the subject.

M. Carton de Wiart:—I bow before your experience, my dear colleague. All the same, you will allow me to decline your lessons. I am replying to what M. Vandervelde said, and it even seems, from his annoyance, that my reply is a very good one (applause on the right—protests on the extreme left).

M. Lorand:—You are not answering anything at all!

M. Carton de Wiart:—On the 23rd July, 1904, the Congo State determined to make an inquiry. It is a normal and excellent procedure; everywhere where colonies exist there are, and there must be, inquiries. Colonies only progress through inquiries.

M. Neujean:—We agree.

M. Carton de Wiart:—England proceeds in the same way. We know that she instituted inquiries in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Basutuland, Nigeria and Natal, on account of the grave abuses which the imposition of the hut tax brought about.* In the German and French Colonies these inquiries have revealed abuses. Moreover, abuses are the *raison d'être* of inquiries, and that is why the latter are instituted. A great many honest people amongst us do not appear to understand this. Let them re-read our inquiry on labour in 1886. Let them re-read our inquiry on the lower middle class, which has just been published, and which contains interminable protests against innumerable abuses. When the inquiry has been ended, what is done? Note is taken of what it has revealed, and abuses are corrected to the extent in which it is possible. And then? Other abuses will take place, because they are the necessary accompaniment of all human institutions. A philosopher was led to say, and not without reason, that the greatest abuse is that which consists in not tolerating any. The Report of the Inquiry is published. It is a remarkable document, and a very interesting one. One may even ask one's self how, in such a short stay in the Congo, from the 5th October, 1904, to the 21st February, 1905, these honourable magistrates were able to assimilate so perfectly African psychology, which is different from ours, and to have given us so complete an opinion on Congo colonisation . . . .

* There has never been a hut-tax in Nigeria. The Inquiry in Nigeria was brought about by the alleged ill-treatment of the Brass natives by the Niger Company's agents. The inquiry on the Sierra Leone hut-tax *was published in full*. That tax was an impost of 5s. *per hut per annum*. It was protested against by those who have led the campaign against the Congo.

M. Massard:—Then the Report is also suspicious?

M. Carton de Wiart:—Who says so? I admire, on the contrary, the way in which they were able to see clearly through delicate controversial questions, such as the land *régime*, and taxes in kind, and commercial concessions; questions in regard to which many of us—myself included—have but a very imperfect idea.* Not only have they elucidated these questions, but they have suggested solutions, and practical reforms—the creation of areas for the collection of produce around native villages, strict application of the law of forty hours, the withdrawal from commercial Companies of the right of coercion, complete independence of the Judiciary from administrative tutelage. The Commission of Inquiry having accomplished its work, the State named a Commission of Reforms. But hardly has this Commission set about its work, before any of its deliberations have transpired, than it is being criticised in a multitude of ways. On the 26th July, 1904, when the Commission of Inquiry had just been named, *Le Peuple* said:—

"We think that if it is desired that the conclusions of this Commission shall be uncontradicted, and free from all suspicion, the choice of the Commissioners should give every satisfaction to Public Opinion. We reserve to ourselves the right of verifying the independence of each of them."

One might have understood, gentlemen, a similar attitude towards the Commission of Reforms. A few days ago, on the 21st February, Mr. Runciman, speaking in the name of Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons, on the discussion of the Address, declared:—

"Before taking any decision the British Government must await the results of the Commission which is sitting in Brussels to study the question of the application of reforms proposed by the Commission of Inquiry."

Is it too much to ask you, Belgians, to maintain the same expectant attitude as the members of the British Government? But no! Such an attitude would not have served your designs. A book appears, this book which occasioned your interpellation, the work of M. Felicien Cattier.

M. Vandervelde:—It was the Report which brought about our interpellation.

M. Carton de Wiart:—The date of your demand of interpellation, and the text of your oration, prove that I am not mistaken. I know M. Felicien Cattier. I had the pleasure of being his colleague when we were studying with Maître Picard, twelve or thirteen years ago . . . .

M. Mansard:—Studying universal suffrage?

M. Carton de Wiart:—No, preparing a *consultus* for the Congo State on the significance of Article 5 of the Act of Berlin, in order to define the State's right of property, and to distinguish the principle of ownership of land, and the principle of commercial liberty.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—That was Cattier in his first stages.

M. Carton de Wiart:—I must admit that in his recent book M. Cattier, although he is a jurist, neglects, somewhat, the juridical

* The most sensible sentence in the speech.

side of the Congo question, just as he neglects its political side. The latter, however, has a powerful interest for us, and our Colonial authors should initiate the Belgian Public on problems such as our markets on the Upper Nile. M. Cattier merely dwells upon the question of exploitation and profits. I wish to say that I do not doubt M. Cattier's good faith, no more than I doubt his ability. But I am less convinced of his special competence, especially of his impartiality. So far as I know, he has never seen the Congo, or any other African Colony.

Several Members on the extreme left:—And you! (Laughter on the extreme left.)

M. Carton de Wiart:—I have seen some (laughter on the right). And I add that, when it is a matter of African colonies, I willingly shelter myself behind the testimony of people who know them personally.

M. Hymans:—That is right, tell us all about your travels (laughter on the left).

M. Carton de Wiart:—If you provoke me to do so (renewed laughter). The Report of the Commission of Inquiry says with truth:—

"One cannot appreciate thoroughly African matters unless one has seen them; one might also say unless one has lived them."

M. Bertrand:—The King-Sovereign has not gone to the Congo either.

M. Carton de Wiart:—That is why one must specially take note of the opinion of those who have been there. As for the impartiality of M. Cattier, it consists sometimes of detaching certain passages with an art worthy of Laubardemont himself. More than once he has "solicited" quotations, according to an expression dear to M. Vandervelde.

M. Vandervelde:—It is an expression of Renan's!

M. Carton de Wiart:—Finally, he commits, in the matter of foreign Colonial legislation, errors which M. Réné Vauthier, in *La Belgique Coloniale et Maritime*, and M. Leon Hennebicq, from the Tribune of the Young Bar at Brussels, have already pointed out. I regret, likewise, that M. Cattier should speak of our missionaries in an offensive and displeasing tone, which is really somewhat peculiar for a man who places humanitarian considerations in the first place. As for our officers, M. Cattier thinks that Africa has been an element of weakness and demoralisation for the army; and he only appears to have any indulgence at all, and to make an occasional exception, in favour of such officers, who, upon their return from the Congo, have thrown aside their uniform to take up commercial and industrial careers. I may add here that the passage in his book which related to a Judge at the Tribunal of First Instance of Brussels was conceived in terms which allowed an unhappy insinuation against the honour of this magistrate to be suggested. This has happily been since removed.

M. Hymans:—M. Cattier removed it in a letter in the *Indépendance*.

M. Carton de Wiart:—He did well. But it would have been better, you will admit, not to have expressed himself in his book in a manner to give birth to this insinuation. "A scientific work," M. Cattier calls his book in his preface. No, gentlemen, a passionate diatribe. Zola used to say of his literary efforts that they were "naturalism seen through a temperament." The book of M. Cattier is the Report of the Commission of Inquiry seen through the temperament of an adversary of the Congo State, and of an adversary of our missionaries. This book, which others have called a pamphlet, was seized upon with voluptuousness by the Hon. M. Vandervelde. He treated it as M. Cattier himself treated the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. He selected its most overwhelming passages, and presented them to us with his usual ability. The book of M. Cattier is the Report of the Commission of Inquiry seen through the temperament of an adversary of the Congo State and of the missions. The speech of M. Vandervelde is the book of M. Cattier seen through the temperament of a Socialist, an opponent of the monarchy, and an opponent of colonial policy. It is a surfeit of charges.

M. Masson:—Be careful that your appreciation is not reversed and applied to yourself.

M. Carton de Wiart:—You will reply to me, my dear colleague, and I do not fear any comparison.

M. Masson:—I do not intend to discuss the matter. The reply has been prepared in advance.

M. Carton de Wiart:—You are inscribed after me. We shall not, therefore, have to wait very long for the pleasure of hearing you. I repeat my queries to the interpellator. What was your object? This is what we are entitled to ask you. Did you wish to point out the abuses of the Congo enterprise? They were known; the Commission had pointed them out with more authority than you could do. Did you wish to ask the Congo State to remedy them? The Congo State did not wait for your intervention to do that, because the Commission for Reforms was constituted before your demand of interpellation was deposited. Is your object to burst in an open door? Are you, from your point of view (which is not the point of view of the plenipotentiaries of Algeciras), an upholder of the policy of the open door? (Laughter on the right.) Did you wish to criticise the conclusions of the Commission of Reforms? We do not know them yet. At least you might grant to this Commission the credit which is given to it elsewhere. In concluding, you asked for a new inquiry. What! On the very day after an inquiry, whose impartiality you cannot dispute! By what right, moreover, would the Belgian Parliament order an inquiry on the Congo? Then what was it you wished? To re-open sores and poison them? Call down upon the Congo enterprise, and those who direct it, the disapproval of your compatriots, or of foreigners? Render the task of good-will more difficult, in discrediting such task in advance? Did you not fear, by your methods, to spread abroad still more that abominable legend, made up of exaggerations and of injustice, which tends to look upon the Belgian coloniser as an assassin? Only a few days ago, gentlemen, I saw

foreign caricatures representing Belgian officers mutilating negroes.* Such is the legend which has crossed the Atlantic, and if I judge therefrom by interruptions which took place on the benches of the extreme left in the course of the speech of M. Woeste, there are even some of you who seem to add faith to this odious legend. Well, gentlemen, it is necessary that justice should be rendered to all, even to those whose ideas one does not approve of. It is good, if only for the honour of our name, that all should know what the Commission of Inquiry states on this subject. This is how it expresses itself: —

"As for the mutilations of the boy Impongi and the woman Boali, perpetrated by guilty sentinels, their object was theft, and, apart from these two cases, it seems therefore that mutilations have never been characterised by tortures voluntarily and of set purpose inflicted. However that may be, one point is incontestable; never has the white man inflicted or caused to be inflicted, as a punishment for shortage in prestations, or for any other cause, such mutilations upon living natives. Facts of this kind have been pointed out to us by no witnesses, and, notwithstanding all our investigations, we have not been able to discover any."§

If you desire, gentlemen, and we all desire to condemn real abuses, and correct them, let us also condemn unjust accusations and reply to them. The abuses appear obvious. M. Beernaert has already explained himself thereon, after the Government had done so. They are specially concerned with the organisation of the land laws. What is the Congo? It is a vast equatorial forest. In the heart of this forest the natives have carried out a few plantations, and have cleared a few open spaces. They have established their villages therein, surrounded with a few primitive plantations, and with a forest zone into which they penetrate, seeking for the produce necessary to their savage life. Is this forest in its entirety the property of the natives? No one will seriously maintain such a thing. In the whole of the conventional basin of the Congo, whether in Uganda, whose legislation must not be confused with that of the English zone between Zanzibar and Tanganyika, whether in German Equatorial Africa, or in French Congo, we see the same principles admitted as regards vacant land.|| In France, since 1904, a legislation more liberal, less arbitrary, than that of Uganda, settles the forest zone, in which the right of private exploitation is recognised to the natives, up to a certain quantity of produce.† This is a legislation which might be copied.

With regard to taxation, gentlemen, what astonishing confusion is bred. Undoubtedly I realise the controversy in regard to principle on which M. Beernaert has touched. Is force necessary to obtain labour? The hon. Minister, consulting the humanitarian side, replies "No." He says that force is not necessary to get the natives to work. He does not approve of the labour tax. However, very numerous colonials believe the contrary,‡ and the Commission of Inquiry agrees with them in saying: —

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* Let the warrants for arrest issued by the Judiciary of the Congo State, and the judgments of the Boma Courts, be published!

§ The Commission evidently omitted to look up the judgments of the Boma Courts in the Mongalla massacres of 1903. The reader is referred to Chapter 10 of "King Leopold's Rule in Africa" (Wm. Heinemann, 1904).

|| This is inaccurate.

† This is inaccurate.

‡ Leopoldian "Colonials," and cosmopolitan South African financiers.

"We have recognised the necessity on the Congo of a labour tax; the amount of that tax, fixed at forty hours per month, appears to us equitable. Similarly, we do not propose to contest the legitimacy of the principle of force inscribed in the law. We think, however, that in the application of this law, agents must show the greatest toleration."

Certainly, I repeat that our ideas agree much more with the notion of a tax in money than of a tax in labour or *Kwanga*.*

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—No tax-payer, even in Belgium, escapes constraint in the matter of taxes.

M. CARTON DE WIART:—I must admit that I fear somewhat these comparisons between the Belgian and the Congo tax-payer. We are but too tempted to have recourse to such comparisons. It leads us to confuse black with white (general laughter). In truth, ideas with which we are familiarised are not in the least applicable in the Congo. The Congo State was indignantly upbraided, I think by M. Lorand, for practising the "truck system" towards the population of the Upper Congo. Why? Because the natives are paid in kind. I should much like to know how they could be paid otherwise in a region where the natives have no idea of money, where their rudimentary needs have not compelled them to exchange amongst themselves, or with others, either round pieces of metal or even bank notes (laughter). With regard to the labour tax, it pleases the Hon. M. Vandervelde to exaggerate the importance which it represents in the general receipts of the Congo State. In reality, this tax does not represent more than a proportion of six per cent., about the same as that which is levied in neighbouring Colonies.§ But it is evident that, if one calculates as he does, if one admits in principle that this rubber in the great forest, in the collection of which the natives are employed, is their property, and if, on these lines, it be considered that they give not only their work, but the product itself, one can argue, as has been done, that the tax represents 600 francs per native per head. It is just as though, in this country, one got a wood-cutter to cut down timber in a garden, or a wood, and looked upon the wood-cutter as ill-treated to the extent of the difference between the salary paid to him and the produce of the sale of the trees which he cut down for the owner.† It is also forgotten that it is not the same individual who is compelled every month on the Congo to carry out the law of forty hours, but that the tax weighs upon the community, and only affects individuals in a very small proportion.‡ Gentlemen, it is asserted, and I repeat after the Commission of Inquiry, that the very grave abuses which have been found to exist, as regards the application of coercion, need prompt reform. These abuses have taken place especially in the Mongalla and the A.B.I.R., and if the State may be asked to

* Native bread.

§ This is ludicrously inaccurate.

† If the garden originally belonged to the wood-cutter, and was seized by force by someone else, and if that someone else, calling himself thereupon owner, summoned the wood-cutter to work for him at a farcical salary, the latter would be looked upon as a victim. Especially if failure to please the spoliator involved the retention of the wood-cutter's wife and children as hostages. That is the true comparison.

‡ The entire community is punished if the fortnightly tax is not forthcoming. The law of forty hours is, of course, a myth.

apply more strictly the law of forty hours, it seems that, as regards the Concessionnaire Companies, the right of using coercion may be withdrawn from them. But as to wishing to immediately substitute the rubber tax and the porterage tax by a money tax, this is a thesis against which I find that all those thoroughly acquainted with colonisation in the African Tropics are opposed.* In countries, moreover, which do not correspond climatically, economically, or juridically with the Congo, the attempt to impose a capitation tax, or a hut tax, has been met with grave difficulties, and has led to far more abominable abuses, such as setting fire to native villages. Here, in this House, authoritative views are swept away in a mere speech. No account is taken of the organising necessities of a young State, face to face with a colossal task. For a little, one would throw it back to the period of beginnings, risking to compromise its future. On the contrary, the Commissioners looked at the matter more closely. They hesitated even to recommend specific solutions. It is only with prudence that they suggest recourse to the system of factories, and indeed this system, substituting itself for that of exploitation by the State, would no doubt have as a consequence the re-establishment of the system of pillage, which has existed for long enough in certain African regions.§ If one realises what the Congolese patrimony† would lose by a system of pillage; if one also sees what the State would lose--that is to say, perhaps, 10,000,000 francs in its revenue --one does not see at all what the native would gain. This system existed formerly in the Kasai, and everyone recognises that it gave most detestable results.‡ I have now a word to say on the financial question, which M. Beernaert treated of. If it appears to me evident that the products of the loan should be logically employed for the needs and the progress of the colony, I cannot, on the other hand, find anything which is monstrous in the existence of the *Domaine de la Couronne.* This constitutes the civil list of the Sovereign.|| What! The Sovereign has the right to leave the whole of the State to Belgium? You do not deny him that right, I suppose? And yet he has not the right to reserve to the Crown a proportion of the revenues of that State. And if he uses that Domaine to develop, according to his ideas, the prosperity and the beauty of the mother country, I really do not see anything to be indignant thereat.

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* Yes, the tax in money is largely a myth also.

§ By the system of Factories and the system of pillage, the author means commercial relationship! The incredible ignorance of so many of the speakers in this debate of African affairs is, perhaps, one of its most notable features.

† What is the Congolese "patrimony"?

‡ The results were only detestable because, the native receiving a decent profit on his transactions with the European, the profits of the said European were not large enough to please the Brussels financiers. When the Kasai region was open to commerce, its development followed normal and legitimate lines. Since 1902, when it has been closed to commercial development, and where force has taken the place of fair commercial dealing, large sections of the country are in course of being exhausted of their rubber, as is the A.B.I.R. Concession, and other parts. There have also been successive uprisings, but the Brussels financiers have made enormous profits, and will continue to do so for a few years; then the shares will go to pieces, as the A.B.I.R. shares are going, and another part of the Congo will have been ruined for many generations to come.

|| Who votes this civil list—the Congo natives?

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Very good.*

M. CARTON DE WIART:—I notice that the debate, owing to its extension, has a tendency to take on a more positive character. All the better. We see, therefrom, how necessary it is to study more closely what concerns our Colony,† and not to limit ourselves to apply thereto ideas of internal political law. It is useful also to suggest practical reforms. We shall show thereby our interest in the enterprise. I propose, for my part, to suggest certain reforms, which, however modest they may be in appearance, might with advantage be adopted. What we all lack, and what the Congo State perhaps also lacks, is a more thorough knowledge of the native; hence errors and continual confusion. I should like to see a monograph of the native according to tribes and regions.§ The missionaries have already taken up this work, but in a restricted measure, without settled ideas, and especially from the religious point of view. This monograph might be made out from the economic and social point of view, and why not according to the methods of Leplay, which have served so well elsewhere? It is necessary also that the magistrates, as the Commission of Inquiry admits, should be free from all administrative tutelage. Perhaps, alongside the magistrate, it would be well that there should be in each district a representative of the natives, an instructor of the natives, a specially-chosen functionary, to safeguard the interests and the rights of the natives. It is by practical suggestions, which might be discussed, and perhaps completed, elsewhere, that we can really show that our intention is to improve the enterprise which royal generosity has leagued to us, and not to overwhelm it with anticipatory ingratitude. Whatever we may do, as M. Beernaert has recalled, the Congo is Belgian; that is the unanimous sentiment of our nation. It is already Belgian in the eyes of Europe. It is destined to become Belgian in reality, and M. Vandervelde, even if he places himself from the special and exclusive point of view of the Congo natives, will not dare to assert that the natives would gain from a humanitarian point of view by being under the protection of a foreign Power, rather than under the protection of Belgium (applause on some benches). We assume, therefore, whether we like it or not, a veritable solidarity in this enterprise, and we should do nothing which tends to compromise it. Of this enterprise we have heard the grandeur; we have been shown the transformation of a territory more than 2,000,000 square kilometres in extent; the suppression of the slave trade has been recalled; cannibalism almost destroyed; alcoholism set aside. A Socialist who dares to say what he thinks, and who does not consider himself bound by manifestoes and Congresses; a Socialist who has been

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* No wonder that the Belgian papers, inspired by the Congo State, are already hinting that if M. de Smet de Naeyer is driven from power at the next elections, he will be chosen by King Leopold as his new Secretary of State.

† "Our Colony," "a foreign State"—these contradictions occur whenever the whitewashers desire to alter the tune.

§ It will have to be tackled quickly, or there will be not enough natives left to make it worth while.

to the Congo, and he the only one, I think, to do so, the Hon. M. Picard, has written, in speaking of the Congo enterprise:—

"The whole is undoubtedly good. In all the history of Colonies, there is no instance of such advanced results obtained in so short a time, with a *personnel* often chosen haphazard, constantly decimated by sickness."*

A very well-known French traveller, M. Edouard Foa, wrote:—

"The Congo State is the finest colonising work which exists in Africa."

This result, which we owe to our Sovereign, and to the assistance which he found amongst our Statesmen in the heart of the Belgian Parliament, and also among the modest or glorious workmen of that enterprise, will astonish posterity. Of this work we are proud, and we must continue to be proud. It has certainly met with, and will meet with, many attacks. I would add that it has found upon its path abuses and errors which are the lot of human enterprises. While these errors must not compromise the enterprise, these attacks must not discourage the workmen (applause on the right). Gentlemen, let the Congo State have the energy to put an end to abuses, exposed, thanks to its own initiative.† Let it not hesitate to subordinate, according to the principles which presided over its foundation, exploitation to civilisation, and I make bold to say that it will see our sympathy and our pride grow still more (applause on the right).

THE SPEAKER:—M. Vandervelde is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Vandervelde.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Gentlemen, I desire to limit my reply; I do not wish to take up the time of the House, and that is why I shall resist the inclination to reply to the first part of the speech of M. Carton de Wiart. The hon. member has spoken to us of many things; of the expedition to China, of the merchant marine, of the speeches of my friend M. Allard, of our anti-colonial opinions. I shall not follow him upon that ground, because that ground is not the ground of the interpellation (protests on the right). But I may be allowed to say that I regret profoundly that, in a debate which touches the rights of humanity, the Hon. Member should merely have seen an opportunity for party attack.

M. CARTON DE WIART:—There is no question of that. We are, on the contrary, all agreed as to the rights of humanity (voices from the left—"No, no"). Do you think that on your benches you have the monopoly of humanity?

M. VANDERVELDE:—You have recognised that there are abuses, and in fairness you ought to have recognised that these abuses, it is we who have pointed them out.

M. WOESTE:—Everyone knew them.

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* This passage was written many years ago, and M. Picard, in a pertinent article in *Le Peuple*, has since disposed of the impression which M. Carton de Wiart has attempted to draw from his former views.

† Thanks, on the contrary, to the overwhelming pressure of British Public Opinion.

M. VANDERVELDE :—How comes it, then, that you waited so long to ask that they should be put an end to? Yours is a grave admission for the Congo State. If it knew of these abuses, it ought to have suppressed them.

M. BERTRAND :—If you knew of them, M. Woeste, you are all the more guilty.

M. VANDERVELDE :—"Everyone knew them," says M. Woeste. But everyone denied them, and amongst those who denied them, the most energetic was M. Woeste.

M. WOESTE :—That is quite inaccurate.

M. BERTRAND :—You denied them only two days ago.

M. WOESTE :—There are abuses in the Congo as there are in Belgium, as there are in all States.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It is true, in point of fact, that on several occasions M. Woeste said that there were abuses in the Congo as there are in Belgium, but that, as in Belgium, these abuses were of an individual character. Now what we have always said, what is obvious from the Report of the Commission, is that these abuses are the consequence of a system, that they have been known for long by the Superior Authorities of the Congo State; that the Judiciary had not done everything which was necessary to prevent them; and, finally, that the State itself profited from the atrocities which it condemns to-day.

M. WOESTE :—I should like to see you at it (laughter and interruptions on the extreme left).

M. PIRNEZ :—And I also.

M. BERTRAND :—Supposing you went out yourself!

M. CAELNWAERT :—Why don't you go out yourself?

M. HYMANS :—This is deportation! (Laughter on the left.)

M. VANDERVELDE :—Does the interruption of M. Woeste signify that he desires to send the Socialists to the Congo? (Laughter on the left and on the extreme left.)

M. WOESTE :—I mean that if you were face to face with local difficulties, you would not speak as you do here, from your place in Parliament.

M. ALLARD :—But M. Vandervelde would not commit crimes!

M. JANSON :—No one would desire to enrich himself by the means which have been employed in the Congo.

M. VANDERVELDE :—It has been to bring millions to the shareholders of the A.B.I.R., to furnish the King with means of domination and corruption, that the moral liabilities which you share to-day have been assumed (applause on the extreme left).

M. WOESTE :—That is a phrase and nothing more.

M. ALLARD :—The crimes and incendiarism are facts.

M. JANSON :—It is you who constantly indulge in phrases.

M. BERTRAND :—You are a merchant of phrases.

M. VANDERVELDE :—In beginning my speech, I said I intended to limit my reply, but the excitable interruptions of the Hon. M. Woeste will compel me to lengthen it.

M. WOESTE :—Oh! I am quite at my ease.

M. VANDERVELDE :—What I wished to do first of all was to reply to the arguments successively brought forward by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both objected that my interpellation lacked juridical basis, and in all loyalty I am compelled to recognise that it is extremely difficult to formulate in the Belgian House a demand for an interpellation on anything which pertains to Congo questions. It is undeniable, indeed, that Belgium has no direct and no normal means of intervening in the affairs of the Congo State, but whose fault is it, if not the fault of those who cut the links which existed up to 1901 between Belgium and the Congo State? When M. Beernaert got the Belgian Parliament to vote the Convention of 1890, by which Belgium lent twenty-five millions to the Congo State, he was careful to reserve our right of control, and our right of demanding information. If M. Beernaert's work had not been destroyed by M. de Smet de Naeyer, our position in interpellating would have been infinitely easier. We should be entitled, on the strength of the Convention of 1890, to demand information. We could claim precise data on the economic and financial situation of the Congo State, and, instead of finding itself in the redoubtable unknown, the House would be in a position to be completely informed. To-day, on the contrary, we are in a position whose absurdity and equivocation has been many times pointed out. When we ask for information, we are told the Congo State is a foreign State; when we denounce abuses, we are told the Congo is a Belgian enterprise. Well, gentlemen, this situation is untenable, and I am not the only one to think so, and to say so, because I would recall to my colleagues on the right what the Hon. M. de Lantsheere (Catholic) said on the 16th August, 1901, at the time when the rejected law, by which Belgium renounced all right of control, was being discussed :—

"The new position which has been created for us, and which totally excludes Belgium from any intervention in Congo affairs, is going to place us in an untenable situation—to undergo all liabilities, without our having the least power, or the least liberty of action. No one in the world has ever consented to accept a responsibility which excludes a right of action, and of freedom. It would be the responsibility for the acts of others, from our Belgian point of view; it would remain our liability from the foreign point of view."

Gentlemen, these words of M. de Lantsheere are invested to-day with prophetic value. We find, indeed, that we are made responsible for the acts of the Congo State, and that, on the other hand, in Belgium we are told that we are powerless to do anything whatever to put an end to abuses which the whole world admits. Nevertheless, if we have no direct means of intervening in Congo affairs, we have the means of action, or, as I said the other day,

of pressure upon the Congo State. It is for that reason that I drew up as I did my interpellation, by founding it first of all on Article 6 of the Act of Berlin, secondly on lending officers and officials, paid by Belgium, to the Congo State, finally on the inconveniences which accrue to Belgium from the *régime* of the personal union with the Congo State. First of all, we based ourselves upon Article 6 of the Act of Berlin, whose text you know: —

"All Powers exercising right of sovereignty or influence in the said territories, shall undertake to watch over the preservation of the native peoples, and the amelioration of their moral and material conditions of existence, and help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade."

It was on the strength of that Article that in 1903 the House of Commons requested the British Government to suggest the coming together of a new International Conference. Now what I maintain to-day is that, in view of the abuses which are admitted by the Commission of Inquiry, and in the event of these abuses not being suppressed by the Congo State, **Belgium should give her adhesion to an International Conference with the object of putting an end to the system of exploitation of the natives, which circumscribes their liberty and their property, to the extinction of their race.** When we say that, the Minister for Foreign Affairs replies to us: "You refuse to see the good sides of the Congo enterprise; the abuses which you point out, and which we admit with you, are individual abuses; moreover, they have almost entirely disappeared. And, finally, the system of coercion which exists in the Congo is at once necessary and beneficial." I reply immediately, and very briefly, to these divers arguments.

We are told, "You refuse to recognise the good sides of the Congo enterprise." Gentlemen, I appeal to your memory. At the beginning of my interpellation, I myself admitted that great things had been accomplished in the Congo, and I thought it was only right to quote that portion of the Report in which is shown all that Belgian energy and perseverance has realised in Tropical Africa. But we are told, "You insist with excessive severity on individual abuses." I reply that these abuses are not individual, because there is a difference between crimes committed individually by men who have no authority, and crimes which are committed, tolerated, desired, ordered even, by men who, on the contrary, exercise the highest authority in the country. Now the events which have taken place in the Congo involve the responsibility of officers, of Station-Chiefs, of District Commissioners, and all those who are at the head of the State. We are again told that these abuses existed formerly; they no longer exist,* and in his speech M. de Smet de Naeyer did not hesitate to assert, as a proof that these abuses no longer existed, the fact that Baron Wahis, Governor-General of the Congo, in the course of his inspection, met two Protestant missionaries, who told him that everything was going on well in the Mongalla Basin! To the statements of these two Protestant missionaries, whose names have not been given to us, I replied in advance by invoking the testimony of fifty-two missionaries, met together at Kinchassa, Stanleypool, in January, 1906, who declare that the condition of affairs has hardly improved

* That has been repeated for ten years by the Congo State.

since the visit of the Commission of Inquiry. Now, gentlemen, amongst these missionaries is to be found Mr. George Grenfell, who was formerly decorated by the Sovereign of the Congo State, who presided over the Commission for the Protection of the Natives, who thought for a long time that the other missionaries exaggerated, but who was compelled to admit the facts when he one day himself assisted at a scene of massacre, over which an Italian officer and a non-commissioned Belgian officer presided.* Finally, it is said that it is possible to cause abuses to disappear without touching the system. It is said that coercion is necessary; that coercion is beneficial; and to prove it, the Chancellor of the Exchequer tells us that some Companies of the Kasai asked to have the same police rights as Companies in the A.B.I.R. or the Mongalla. I certainly think that, so far as the Companies are concerned, who demand large quantities of rubber without paying its counter-value, coercion is necessary. But what it is requisite to ascertain is whether coercion is of benefit to the natives, and if it is indispensable. Now, that it is disastrous for the natives is admitted by the abuses which have taken place; and that it is not necessary is shown by the Resolution which I recalled the other day, unanimously voted by the Congress of Colonial Sociology of 1900, a Resolution which contends that forced labour must necessarily bring about abuses, and is not in the least needed in order to procure labour. Thus very little is left of anything which has been replied to us. What remains, what we know, are the abuses themselves. This interpellation has given men belonging to all parts of the House the opportunity of declaring that these abuses are abominable, and that they must be made to disappear.

I now come to the second part of my interpellation. I said that, in view of the admitted abuses in the Congo, the Belgian State has the right either to decline to place its officials any longer at the disposal of the Congo State, or to subordinate such authority to the realisation of reforms. M. Woeste replied, "These officials are on leave." This is materially inaccurate, and after having reflected over his contention, the Hon. Member will certainly not maintain it, for last year it was shown, in the course of a discussion on the war estimates, that a certain number of officers, professedly detached from the Institute of Military Cartography, were, in point of fact, employed by the Congo State. We were then told that these officers were rendering service to the country, and were fulfilling a scientific and humanitarian mission, and that, far from blaming the Belgian Government, we ought to praise it. I do not wish to generalise. I render homage to the explorers, to the scientists, to those who accomplished or are accomplishing civilising work; but I will add to this that it is no longer possible to deny that large numbers of officers sent to the Congo are there transformed into commercial agents, and have there acted in a manner which is of a kind to cause the greatest harm to the good repute of the Belgian Army. Yesterday, again, M. Lorand read to us an almost inconceivable letter, signed by a man who has been made a hero of in the struggle against the slave trade,

* I do not think M. Grenfell was present at this scene.

Commandant Jacques. Having been apprised that the natives employed in the collection of rubber had cut the vines, instead of tapping them, this officer wrote to an official in charge of a station: "Warn these people if they cut another vine I will exterminate them to the last man." Now, Commandant Jacques, who wrote this letter, spoke of the natives of Inoryo—that is to say, of a village in the *Domaine de la Couronne*. These natives, whom it was desired to exterminate, because they cut the vines, were the unfortunate natives who were working to furnish the millions which have served in the construction of the monumental arcade, and to the improvement of the Laeken Palace! This letter of Commandant Jacques is not, moreover, an exceptional one, or an individual abuse, as M. Woeste contends. It only needs to be compared with other documents of the same kind, and notably of that monstrous letter addressed to the officials in charge of the stations on the Rubi-Welle, by the General Commissioner of the Welle district, Commandant Verstraeten: —

"I have the honour to inform you that from the 1st January, 1899, you must manage to supply 4,000 kilos. of rubber per month. To that effect, I give you *carte blanche*. You have two months in which to work your people. Employ gentleness at first, and if they persist in resisting the demands of the State, employ force of arms" (outcry).

Must other examples be given? I quoted the other day a circular, by which the Congo State offered bonuses to officers who recruited natives for the *Force Publique*, and the Hon. M. Woeste told me, this is a system which is analogous to the bonuses given to the recruiting of volunteers in Belgium. To reply to that argument, and to show how, at the beginning, these men of the *Force Publique* were obtained, it is sufficient to read another letter, also signed by an officer of the Belgian Army, Capt. Commandant Sarrasin: —

"Chief Ngulu, of Wangata, is sent into the Maringa to buy slaves for me." (Renewed outcry.) **"Ask the Agents of the A.B.I.R. to be good enough to inform me of the ill-deeds which he may commit en route."**

Well, gentlemen, I ask you whether we should lend officers to the Congo State to "work the people," to "buy slaves" for the *Force Publique*, to make rubber, by threatening the natives to exterminate them to the last man. I say that to authorise officers to carry out such work as this, is not to increase the prestige of the Belgian Army, but to dishonour it (applause on the Socialist benches).

And now, gentlemen, I come to the third point. I said that the personal union between Belgium and the Congo State had many political and financial inconveniences for our country. Political inconveniences. Do you think that if the Congo State, if the Congolese absolutism, had not been organised as it has been organised for the last twenty years, Belgian policy would be to-day what it is? Do you think that the military projects* would have been passed? Do you not think that Congolese absolutism

* *E.g.*, the fortification of Antwerp.

reacts upon Belgian constitutionalism? Do you want a proof of it? You will find it in the speech of M. Woeste himself, who two days ago made a very eloquent apologia of the personal power . . .

M. Masson:—Of absolutism.

M. Vandervelde:— . . . Who quoted the words of M. Emile Augier, "Despotism fertilises chaos." There are a certain number of despotic States in Europe; there is Russia, there is Turkey, and there is the Congo State, whose head-quarters are in Brussels. Now I maintain that in these three countries, where absolutism reigns, personal power has not fertilised chaos, but has engendered chaos. It has engendered it, not only in the political world, but in the financial world. With regard to the latter, I shall not quote again from the book of M. Cattier, but I intend to reply briefly to the denial of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. According to the latter, M. Cattier has exaggerated in the most formidable proportions:—

"It is not true that the *Domaine de la Couronne* possesses real estate at Ostend and at Brussels. It is not true that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has made 70 millions of francs in ten years; it has made barely 18 millions. It is not true that the Congo State has expended more than 100 millions outside that country; it has spent barely 50."

Well, gentlemen, let us examine separately these three statements. First of all, the Minister said that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has only bought real estate in the *arrondissement* of Ostend and Brussels, and that consequently M. Cattier spoke frivolously when he said that real estate had been secured by the *Domaine de la Couronne* in other *arrondissements*. Now, gentlemen, I have here before me an extract issued by one of the subordinates of the Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . .

M. Bertrand:—The Minister would do well to listen.

M. Vandervelde:— . . . by the Registrar of Mortgages of Bruges, which establishes in an indisputable manner that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has bought real estate elsewhere than in the *arrondissements* of Ostend and Brussels. It is concerned with a sale made by Leopold II., King of the Belgians, to the *Domaine de la Couronne*, for a sum of more than 5,000,000 francs. In passing, I ask the Minister for Justice what is the *Domaine de la Couronne?* What is this "moral personality"? How has it been tolerated that officers of the Government should sign deeds by which an obviously illegal mortmain has been constituted? But I return to the extract which I have before me. It shows that, apart from the real estate purchased by the *Domaine de la Couronne* in the *arrondissements* of Brussels and Ostend, there is other real estate situate in the Commune of Middelkerke, which belongs, I believe, to the *arrondissement* of Furnes.

M. Buyl:—To the administrative *arrondissement* of Ostend.

M. Vandervelde:—In any case, other real estate is situate in the Communes of Tervueren and Wesembeke, in the *arrondissement* of Louvain. There is the domaine d'Ardennes, that of Cierguon, and that of Villers-sur-Lesse, situate in the Provinces of Namur and Luxemburg. I am obliged, therefore, to note that the Hon.

Minister, when he affirmed that the real estate belonging to the *Domaine de la Couronne* was to be found exclusively in Brussels and Ostend, laid himself open to be contradicted by his own officials* (interruption on the left). I now turn to the question of the *Domaine de la Couronne*. This is what the Hon. Minister said: —

"According to M. Cattier, the rubber zone has an area of 1,026,875 square kilometres. Now the area of the zone where rubber is exploited covers 2,015,000 square kilometres, because it should be noted that the rubber zone must not be confounded with the forest zone, which M. Cattier seems to have taken as the basis. Root rubber, which grows in the plains of numerous districts, furnishes a latex equal in value to the finest vines, although mixed with impurities which have not been entirely eliminated hitherto, and which cause it to lose a portion of its value. Two other parts of the rule of three adopted by M. Cattier to evaluate the *Domaine de la Couronne* are equally erroneous. The area of this Domaine is not 289,000 kilometres square, but 252,300 kilometres square,, and the price of 7,000 francs, which he adopts as the mean profit per ton from 1896 to 1905, is too high by 2,500 to 3,000 francs. On the other hand, it is to be noted that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has only been exploited, as such, since 1900. In rectifying, as I have done, and still following the method of M. Cattier, we arrive at a figure of 18 millions, instead of 70 millions."

M. de Smet de Naeyer affirms, therefore, that M. Cattier was mistaken in estimating the extent of the rubber area of the Congo. According to him, this area covers 2,015,000 kilometres square. Now do you know what the total area of the Congo is, according to the *Almanach de Gotha?* It is 2,380,000 kilometres square, from which must be deducted the lakes, rivers, and numerous swampy districts, which reduces to less than 2,000,000 of square kilometres the total area of the exploitable land. Now, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asserts that the rubber area itself is more than 2,000,000 kilometres square! In point of fact, only a portion, about half the territory, is particularly rich in rubber vines, and at the present time the whole of this portion is not even exploited. Moreover, it should be noted that if a little rubber is obtainable outside the rubber area properly so-called, the portion of which the *Domaine de la Couronne* is composed, includes the finest forests on the Congo, and has a higher output than the mean output of the forest zone. In the second place, the Minister tells us that the price of 7,000 francs arrived at as the average price per ton, is too high by 2,500 to 3,000 francs per ton at least. I have no time to reply fully to this gratuitous assertion. I content myself with saying that the evaluation of M. Cattier was made by a specialist, who recognised that the rubber cost the State about 2,168 francs per ton, which leaves a profit of about 2,740 francs per ton. On the other hand, contrary to the statement of the Minister, the exploitation of the *Domaine de la Couronne* began before 1900, and, after inquiry, I find that the area of the *Domaine de la Couronne* is duly 289,000 kilometres square, and not 250,000 kilometres square. But you will tell me, "these are statements and estimates which we cannot verify." This is obvious in itself, but what then was the speech of the Minister, except a series of assertions

* M. Cattier published complete lists of the purchase of real estate in the *arrondissements* of Brussels and Ostend. The total value of these purchases amounted to over 18,000,000 francs. These lists having been published, no attempt, of course, was made by the Belgian Premier to deny them. In his book M. Cattier explained that, owing to the heavy cost entailed in getting information, he could not pursue his inquiry into the other *arrondissements* of the country.

and estimates, some of which are obviously inaccurate, and others of which totally lack proof? There was, however, a very easy method by which he could have confounded M. Cattier, and have proved to us that the *Domaine de la Couronne* has not brought in 70,000,000 francs profit in ten years. That method would have consisted in giving us the real figures of the profits. Until he does do so, we shall continue to believe that the evaluations of M. Cattier approximate to the truth, and we are all the more inclined to believe it, in view of the admission of the interested parties themselves that the Colonial museum at Tervueren will cost 30 millions, and that the embellishment of the Palace at Laeken will absorb an equal sum, without speaking of the monumental arcade, and real estate in Brussels and Ostend, and the properties on the Riviera..

Finally, gentlemen, I arrive at the third point mentioned by the Hon. Minister—"M. Cattier also exaggerated in considerable proportions the yield of the loan on the lottery system. Instead of fifty millions, this loan has only brought in seven or eight millions!" At first sight it hardly seems likely that 150 millions have been borrowed in order to obtain so meagre a result. Moreover, the Minister affirms nothing—he takes good care not to do so—but contents himself with an estimate, quoting a letter of Baron Van Eetvelde, dating from 1895! Once more was it easy— the Minister's relations with the Congo State are sufficiently close—it was easy, I say, to inform us in a precise manner, and to oppose to the figure of M. Cattier the true figure, the official figure; for let us not forget that M. Cattier has never said that his figures were anything more than a mere estimate, and that the lack of details furnished by the financial publications of the Congo State made this estimate extremely difficult. But let us admit for a moment, as a pure hypothesis, that the figures quoted by the Minister are accurate. If so, the sums received by the Congo State from the issue of bonds are reduced to 65,700,000 francs. To this must be added the 5,000,000 lent by Belgium in 1890, and the 5,287,000 issued to reimburse M. de Browne de Tiège, which makes a total of 75,987,000 francs. Now it seems to be admitted that the deficit of the Congo Budget* has only amounted to 27 million francs. Therefore, according to this reckoning, not 100 millions, as M. Cattier says, but about 50 millions, or, more accurately, 48,987,000 francs have been employed for other objects than the development of the Colony. Of these two statements, which is the true one? Is M. Cattier or is the Chancellor of the Exchequer accurate? Have 50 million francs been borrowed to expend elsewhere than in the Colony, or have 100 millions been borrowed with this object? I cannot assert one way or another; none of us can do so; but what is beyond dispute is that, under the present conditions, it is impossible for us to form an idea, having any precision, on the financial state of the Congo. Yet this question is one of capital importance, because the debt of the Congo State steadily increases, and at the present moment can be estimated as follows:—First of all, according to the figures furnished by the Government, 67,432,000 francs (nominal value of

* *E.g.*, the official figure. There has, of course, been no real deficit at all, but a large surplus, scandalously concealed from the world.

the bonds issued), plus 31,804,615 francs lent by Belgium, or a total of 99,236,615 francs. It would seem, therefore, according to the declarations of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the total debt of the Congo State amounts at the present moment to very nearly 100 million francs. Now if Belgium takes over the Congo some day, she will have to reimburse these 100 million francs, and this public debt has no other compensating advantage than the portfolio of the State, which is composed for the greater part of shares in the A.B.I.R., and in the Mongalla Concessionnaire Companies, which will lose nearly all their value from the very day that the rubber system is abolished. This is what I had to establish, and now what must be the conclusions of this debate? I signed the Resolution of M. Masson and his friends, because I think it is the *maximum* which we can obtain at this moment, and that it is profoundly desirable that we should unite in a complete disapproval of the abuses which everyone has condemned. I suggested, moreover, the creation of a Commission of Inquiry in regard to the financial and other consequences which might result for Belgium if she takes over the Congo. We have been told that this Commission could not act, because it would be without precedent that an inquiry should be made into a foreign State. It would seem that that is left to Vice-Consuls, appertaining to the Department of Foreign Affairs, who make secret inquiries in British Colonies.

M. DE FAVEREAU:—There is no question of secret inquiry, because the results were published in documents communicated to the House.

M. CARTON DE WIART:—In the "Recueil Consulaire."

M. VANDERVELDE:—Yes, some of the results were published, but others were utilised by the Congo State to direct its criticisms against British Colonies.* Moreover, I shall not labour the point, because . . . .

M. DE FAVEREAU:—You are well advised.

M. VANDERVELDE:— . . . Because the important matter is that we should be enlightened on the financial and economic state of the Congo before pronouncing on a possible annexation. I am told it is impossible to make an inquiry in the territory of a foreign State, without the consent of the latter. I reply that this consent could, apparently, be obtained by the Belgian Government. I reply further that this Commission of Inquiry could take place in Belgium, and could listen to Belgians who would give, under oath, data on the position, which they know, of the Congo State. I add that, in making this proposal, I have only repeated a suggestion which was made some time ago by my hon. colleague and friend, M. Janson. At that period, this is what M. Beernaert replied:—

"It has often been asserted that the affairs of the Congo territory were too little known, and that they were surrounded by I do not know what mystery. Well, henceforth, all the desirable details, we shall have them, the development of the occupation of the country, the number of commercial agents, financial burdens—we shall know all. The Hon. M. Janson demanded some time ago, moved by a friendly thought for this great enterprise, that

* In "La Vérité sur le Congo."

the Belgian Government should institute an inquiry. He would have liked to send Commissioners to the Congo, and to have got them to report. Instead of a mission confided to a few men for a few months, we will have a permanent inquiry, which will last ten years. You will be informed of all the facts and all the figures calculated to enlighten Public Opinion."

Well, gentlemen, all that was true in 1890, at the time when M. Beernaert was speaking, and it is to his credit that, when he caused the Convention of 1890 to be voted, he safe-guarded the rights of Belgium. But this does not hold good to-day. We can no longer obtain information. We do not know the financial condition of the Congo State. The permanent inquiry begun in 1890 has ceased, and if to-morrow we had to come to a decision on the eventual annexation of the Congo, we should have no certain data; we should not be able to accept even the succession of the King after making the regulation inventory. This is what M. Masson understood, and this is the reason for which he has presented a Resolution, which I was happy to sign with him. This Resolution demands information on the consequences of eventual annexation, and reserves, in the most formal manner, the question of knowing if the Congo shall, or shall not, be annexed. The Resolution can therefore be voted by all those who wish to see clearly, whatever may be their opinion on Colonial policy. One word, in closing, on the Resolution presented by M. Beernaert. This Resolution contains three parts. One of them is identical with the closing part of our Resolution, and demands an immediate discussion of the projected law relating to the system to be established in our future colonial possessions. M. Carton de Wiart asked me a little while ago if I was converted to annexation, as I demanded an immediate discussion of the projected law. Not the least in the world . . . .

M. Carton de Wiart:—I asked you if you were or were not systematically hostile to annexation.

M. Vandervelde:— . . . But before giving an opinion on annexation, it is essential that we should know if it is intended to maintain in the Congo the *régime* of absolutism which exists to-day, or if it is proposed to give to natives and to Belgians the guarantees of a Parliamentary control. The first portion of the Resolution of M. Beernaert contains a very opportune reference to the principles of the Act of Berlin, relating to the protection of the natives, and to the maintenance of commercial freedom. I suggest to M. Masson to add to our Resolution this sentence of the Resolution of M. Beernaert:—

"Seeing that Belgium is imbued with the principles which presided at the foundation of the Congo State, and which inspired the Act of Berlin."

M. de Smet de Naeyer:— . . . "And renders homage to all those who have devoted themselves to this civilising work."

M. Vandervelde:—Allow me, it is necessary that we should be explicit on that point, and that we should know to whom homage is rendered. I approve of all those who with disinterestedness, for love of science, penetrated with an ideal which is not mine, have gone to the Congo, and have often lost their lives there, but I decline to include in that approval, by means of an equivocation, those who have never been to the Congo, but who have directed

from here the frightful financial machine which has carried demoralisation and death amongst the populations of equatorial Africa (applause on the extreme left).

M. Hellepütte:—There is no possible equivocation. I demand to be heard.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—The Hon. M. Vandervelde intends to exclude from his approval the founder of the enterprise itself.

M. Vandervelde:—In the Resolution of M. Beernaert there is another portion, which for my part I consider quite inacceptable. It is that in which he affirms his confidence in the Commission of Reforms, and in the results which will be given to its Resolutions. I said already, in my first speech, and I will not repeat it now at length, that it is impossible for me to have the confidence which M. Beernaert seems to have in the work of the Commission of Reforms. First of all, because of the way in which it is composed, for it includes a majority of officials, and behind these officials we find an administrator of the A.B.I.R. modestly concealing himself! Secondly, and especially, because **those of the Members of the Commission in whom I should be inclined to have full and entire confidence, such, for instance, as the President of the Commission of Enquiry, admit in principle the system of Coercion and of Forced Labour.** Now, and I can invoke on this point the opinion of the Colonial Congress to which I referred a moment ago, I maintain that coercion is not necessary; that a system of forced labour involves disastrous consequences; and that, as long as it has not disappeared, some improvements may be brought about, some degrees of native suffering may be alleviated, but the evil will not have been destroyed in its root (applause on the extreme left). It is for these reasons, gentlemen, that if I vote the first and latter portions of the Resolution of M. Beernaert, I cannot associate myself with the confidence which he displays in the accomplishment of serious reforms by the Congo State. On the other hand, I will willingly vote the Resolution presented by M. Colfs, which is the logical result of the arguments which I have used here.

M. Hymans:—Then you will vote all the Resolutions? (Laughter.)

M. Vandervelde:—Yes, so long as in these Resolutions there shall be a thought of reproving the abuses which I condemn . . .

M. Lorand:—Just so.

M. Vandervelde:— . . . so long as they announce measures calculated to make these abuses disappear, I am ready to vote them, because in this question I am not concerned with party politics, but only with humanitarian considerations (applause on the Socialist benches). That is why I can afford to set aside the argument which has been employed, first by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, then by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and then by M. Carton de Wiart, which consists in saying that we are lacking in patriotism, because we attack the abuses of the Congolese administration. I love, and I love as much as you, the country to which I belong,

and it is precisely on that account that I feel a painful humiliation each time that the crimes and atrocities committed in Africa by Belgians in the service of the Congo State are drawn attention to. How should I not feel such a sentiment of humiliation, when I read the debates in the House of Commons on Congo affairs; when I see the Italian Government forbidding its officers, even on leave, from taking service in the Congo State; when I learn that the dying words of De Brazza, pronounced at Dakar, have been, "The French Congo must not become a second Mongalla"? I experienced the same feeling when I saw, a few days ago, the article on Colonial Administration by Professor Reinsch, who says that the *régime* of exploitation and waste of natural riches actually prevailing on the Congo is analogous only with what existed formerly in the first Spanish Colonies. The consequence of all this is that other countries are giving us a reputation which I regard as undeserved. Abroad we are thought to be an energetic, enterprising people, but fond of gain, unscrupulous, hesitating before no cruelty to satisfy our thirst for profit. Well, gentlemen, I say that this reputation, which we are earning through the abuses of the Congo administration, is unjust.

M. Carton de Wiart:—The echo of your speeches has something to do also with this unfortunate legend.

M. Vandervelde:—The immense majority of the Belgians are industrious and peaceful workers. They have not benefited by the profits obtained thanks to the horrors of the Congo. What they may have been reproached with, hitherto, has been a sort of moral apathy, of indifference for crimes committed too far from us. But there is still time to wash ourselves of this stigma. There is time to say that we are not concerned in these crimes, and that we are unanimous in condemning them, and if we say that, what will remain of the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer? He has spoken to us of money, of profits, of presents made to Belgium. **I tell him that this money, these profits, these presents are shameful things, because they are the result of the exploitation of a whole people, and I hope that in this debate, where common feelings have united many of us, the last word will remain with humanity.** (Loud applause on the extreme left.)

The Speaker:—M. Masson is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Masson.

M. Masson:—A few friends and myself thought that it was indispensable to draw a conclusion from this debate; not to allow this interpellation to end in smoke, as those which have preceded it. We thought that it was necessary that the House, inspired by facts now known, should endeavour to draft a Resolution dictated by the interests of the country. Our Resolution does not differ very notably from that of M. Beernaert. We ask the same as he does, but we ask more than he does. We ask, as he does, that we should deliberate as soon as possible on the proposed law for the organisation of Colonial possessions; but we desire also that the

Government should demand the communication of all documents calculated to enlighten Belgium on the condition of the Congo State. On the first point, I have little left to say; the Hon. M. Beernaert has said, better than I could say, everything that was necessary. I shall deal especially with the second point. First of all, I wish to explain my state of mind. I am not a Congophobe, and, on the other hand, I have never been concerned in colonial affairs. I am in the same position as the majority of Belgians, who have followed with interest, and, I add, with sympathy, this assuredly extraordinary Colonial enterprise. I have approved it. I recognise, like the majority of our citizens, that great things have been done therein, and that the initiator of this Colony has been inspired by interests of a superior order, favourable to civilisation, and favourable to the prosperity of Belgium. The letter which he wrote to M. Beernaert, enclosing his will and testament, proves this. I speak, therefore, with absolute independence, without partiality, and happy at last to be able to emerge from the state of perplexity in which, together with many of my fellow citizens, I have been placed, between the accused and the accuser. Until last year, it was impossible for us to form an opinion on the value of the attacks directed against the Congo State, to measure the truth or the injustice of them. The acts of the officials of the State, or its agents, remain enveloped in a sort of mystery; we do not know the facts, because it pleases the Congo State to keep its affairs secret, and not to place itself in the light of publicity. The accusers brought forward facts, whose precision was calculated to move us and convince us. The accused and his friends denied the charges, and brought counter accusations of suspicious motives. It was impossible to come to a conclusion, and to sort out elements of certainty between these various statements. This situation has come to an end. The veil has been torn aside. Since the publication of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry light has been made, and I do not hesitate to say that it is as complete as it was possible to make it. I do not share the views of my hon. friend, M. Lorand, on the manner in which the Commission has accomplished its duty. He would have liked a speech for the prosecution. We have had, and I think it was better, a fair and sound judgment; not only did the Commission show impartiality, but it plainly saw the things which it was necessary to see. It investigated facts from a high standpoint, in their entirety, but also closely in their details. Thanks to the Report, we know now how the Congo is organised; how its power is employed; to what abuses the system has given birth. Its investigations were carried into all districts whence complaints and recriminations have proceeded.* Nothing, or almost nothing, escaped its penetrating investigation. We must recognise this, and we must have the courage to say so. I have been expecting such an admission from the Government. Grave errors have been committed on the Congo. There has not only been violence and individual excesses, but faults in the organisation of certain fundamental institutions; in the land *régime;* in the establishment of taxation, and its methods of enforcement; in the formation of the police or Force Publique. The Administration has set aside, on these

* This is quite inaccurate.

various points, the principles of justice and humanity, and its shortcomings have brought about the worst excesses, or facilitated the violent acts of which some of its agents are accused. This must be loyally recognised, however great the authority one is confronted by (applause on various benches on the left and extreme left). When I communicated to my friends my desire to draw a conclusion from this debate, and when I expressed the opinion that it was necessary to obtain henceforth thorough information on the condition of affairs in the Congo, and that to this end the communication of documents calculated to throw light on the financial situation and the administration was indispensable, I was told that we were not entitled to make such demands, because, if the Convention of 1890 allowed us to do so, that of 1901 had withdrawn from us such right. I had taken note of the terms of the new Convention, and read the legislative documents, those calculated to set forth the contentions of the contracting parties, but it did not appear to me that so unhappy an interpretation to Belgian interests could be drawn from the documents of preparatory labours—somewhat confused, it must be admitted, and deprived of clearness and precision. I was persuaded that we still possessed the right of obtaining from the Congo State the communications inscribed by the law of 1890. I could not bring myself to believe that the Belgian Government, with no interest to the country, but, on the contrary, despite Belgian interests . . . .

M. Bertrand :—The Government has always sacrificed them!

M. Masson :— . . . . had made such an unbelievable concession to the Congo State, and I cannot understand the motives which induced it to do so, unless it was desired to push condescension and accommodation beyond reasonable limits.

M. Bertrand :—This is one of the remarkable faculties of the present Government.

M. Masson :—But, confronted with the unanimous opinion of my hon. colleagues, with whom I consulted in all three parts of the House, I am compelled to bow to facts, and take things as they are. **We have, therefore, no rights. We can claim nothing.** The Congo Government does not like intervention in its affairs. Publicity is repugnant to it. It may be compared with the owner of a great domain, who, saddled with the weight of an immense and complicated business, intends to settle it himself, and manage his fortune with jealous care, without consulting presumptive heirs, without initiating successors to the numerous difficulties which they will some day have to confront. It is somewhat human, but the desire of the successors not to be systematically put on one side, and kept in ignorance, is thoroughly legitimate. Now such is our case. The possibility of annexation must preoccupy us. The question will necessarily come forward one day, and perhaps before long. Various circumstances can bring it about, and we know that twice previously it came before us, in 1885 and 1901. As M. Vandervelde truly said, it is not in a few days, or in a few months, that we can form an enlightened and accurate opinion on the condition of the Congo State, or pronounce on the advisability of annexation. The inventory of a great domain

cannot be made on the lines of an individual will. To understand a country, the life of that country must be lived, and its daily public manifestoes followed. If we know so well what takes place in Belgium; if we are thoroughly convinced of her true interests, of the character of her institutions, it is because we see history in the making, every day. Not an important event escapes us. All the acts, outcome of the powers of the State, are undertaken in public, are discussed before the eyes of the nation. It is to be hoped that such may be the same for the Congo State. If we are disarmed by the Convention of 1901, if we can no longer formulate an injunction, we can at least express a demand. I cannot believe that that demand would be repelled. It is too legitimate to be met with a refusal. But if the case should be otherwise, if what our interest demands is not recognised, we should still possess means of action sufficiently powerful to break down all unreasonable resistance, and that would be the time to make use of it (applause on the opposition benches). The Government must emerge from the lamentable situation in which it has placed itself. Its dignity compels it. The Government must tell us, if it has sufficient independence and firmness to associate itself with us, if it has resolved to demand from the Congo State the communication of all documents calculated to enlighten the House and the country, even though the Congo State were to be pressed on the point, or whether the Government prefers to leave Belgium in ignorance of things which it ought to know, rather than displease the Congo State. If the Government adopts the latter attitude, the only thing that can be said of it is that its members are the docile servants of the Congo State, pushing a wish to please to the point of servility. ("Very good, very good." Applause on the left and extreme left.)

THE SPEAKER:—Gentlemen, three more speakers are inscribed, but all have promised to be brief. On the other hand, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has also asked to be heard. Under these conditions, will not the House consent to prolong the sitting, in order to allow the debate to be brought to an end? (Unanimous approval.)

M. MULLENDORFF:—Shall we vote to-day?

THE SPEAKER:—Certainly.

Speech by the Premier.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Gentlemen, I have only a few observations to make. The House will certainly have been struck by the weakness of the reply given by M. Vandervelde to my speech of yesterday. As I remarked in the course of my explanations, it was not my business to produce here specific figures as regards the amount of the revenues of the *Domaine de la Couronne*, and their usage, or as regards the management of the finances of the Congo State. All I had to do was to demonstrate the amount of confidence which the work of M. Cattier deserves, and it is with that object that I pointed to several gross errors in the figures cited by the author.* The reply of M. Vandervelde in no way contradicts my

* The ideas of M. de Smet de Naeyer, with regard to the exposure of gross errors, can be left to the discretion of the reader!

demonstration. Referring to what belongs in Belgium to the Domaine of the Crown of the Congo, the Hon. Member replies by speaking of the Colonial Palace at Tervueren. Now, I said that the Domaine possesses in Brabant real estate in the *arrondissement* of Brussels and Louvain. My critic loses sight of the fact that Tervueren is in the *arrondissement* of Louvain, as he forgot that Middelkerke belongs to the *arrondissement* of Ostend. The Hon. Member quoted, moreover, the Domaine of the Ardennes, of Ciergnon, and Villers-sur-Lesse. Now, far from belonging to the Domain of the Crown of the Congo, these estates belong to the Belgian State, with the exception of the usufruct reserved by the royal donor, on the strength of the donation made a few years ago by His Majesty King Leopold II. A word as to the Congo debt. M. Vandervelde thinks that a capital of 50 millions, at least, coming from loans, has, in a sense, been dissolved into smoke, and that this debt, being short of a counter-value, will come as a dead loss to Belgium, the day when the latter takes over the Colony. Does M. Vandervelde ignore, then, all the considerable expenses, the results of which are described in the picture traced by the Commission of Inquiry at the opening of its Report, and which must evidently have been covered for the greater part by the loan. Studies for railways; mineral reserves; works of fluvial importance on the river and its affluents; the construction of inland ports, notably the great fluvial port of Leopoldville, which was admired by the Commission of Inquiry;* the extension of the flotilla; defensive works on the territory; does all this count for nothing in the extraordinary expenses of the Congo State?

M. Vandervelde:—This does not do away with the fact that millions have been expended in unproductive works outside the Colony.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—That is quite a gratuitous statement. You mix up the *Domaine de la Couronne* with the finances of the Congo State. Gentlemen, M. Masson gave legitimate homage to the Commission of Inquiry, but he is strangely mistaken when he thinks that the book of M. Cattier is a sort of authorised commentary of that Report. One would think M. Masson had not read the book of M. Cattier.

M. Buyl:—He did not speak to us about it. You were not listening.

M. Hymans:—He spoke of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, and not of the book of M. Cattier.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I am taking note of an interruption by M. Masson to my speech of yesterday. Here is what I read in the shorthand report, page 385, in connection with the passage of my speech where I call M. Cattier's book a pamphlet:—

"M. Masson:—How can you say that? He has done nothing more than paraphrase the Report of the Commission of Inquiry."

M. Jourez:—He spoke to us to-day about the Report.

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* Which Commission also stated that the population around Leopoldville was dying out, crushed to earth by the monstrous food tax.

M. Hymans:—He has just made his speech. You ought to reply to that speech, and not to the interruption.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I have the right to reply to the interruption of the Hon. M. Masson, and I refer him to what M. Réné Vauthier has just written, in a very interesting criticism, published by the "Mouvement Maritime et Colonial":—

"The author of the study on the condition of the Congo State," says M. Vauthier, "does not hesitate to deplore on many occasions the incompetence, not to say the ignorance which in his opinion is attested by so many errors(!) of the Members of the Commission of Inquiry sent to the Congo . . . ."

I will not inflict the House with a further quotation, but I advise my hon. colleagues to read the pamphlet entitled, "A Wicked Book," reproducing the criticism of M. Vauthier, and they will recognise that the book of M. Cattier, far from being an authorised comment upon the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, is the opposite. Gentlemen, I do not wish to abuse the right of speech, but I must really point out to the House an amusing contradiction. The present debate has been concerned to a large extent with the labour exacted from the natives as a tax in kind, and to coercion, and you have heard the Hon. M. Beernaert express on this subject an opinion which is opposed to that defended by M. Carton de Wiart and by myself. Now, if I open the book of M. Cattier, on page 103 I find the following passage:—

"It is inaccurate that coercion is the only means that colonising States possess to obtain black labour. It would seem that here we can observe among the members of the Commission a relative inexperience, and, moreover, a very natural one, of colonial affairs . . . ."

In other words, gentlemen, the incompetence, not to say the ignorance, of the Commission of Inquiry, as M. Vauthier writes! M. Cattier acquired his experience of colonial affairs at Bangkok, in the service of the Anglo-Siamese Government! (Murmurs on the left.)

"Contrary to what the Commission thinks," continues M. Cattier, "the native can be constrained to furnish a certain amount of labour by many indirect means. One of the latter is the imposition of a tax in money, whether the basis of the impost is individually, per hut, or per village. The native does not possess money; he is therefore compelled to buy, and he can only procure it by buying it from European merchants against commercial products. These commercial products he is compelled to collect them, and is therefore led to work."

It would seem, then, that the solution of the problem of accustoming the black man to labour consists in substituting indirect coercion for direct coercion. M. Cattier does not perceive that he is solving the question by the question, losing sight of the fact that the obstacles by which we are opposed is, precisely, the apathy and the absence of all requirements on the part of the negro. Is not this a truly childish argument? The Congo State compels the native to furnish it, as a tax, with forty hours' labour per month.* Horror! cries M. Cattier; you compel him to work, and this constraint is opposed to human liberty! What you ought to do would be to establish a tax in money, either on himself, or on his hut, or on his village. The negro has no money, and he will be compelled to work to get some! Now, gentlemen, the native

* Translated in practice by 286 days per annum *minimum*.

who is compelled to work for a small part of his time† knows what is required of him, and is in a position to give what is required of him, the more so as he sees the white men working themselves. But if you ask him for money, which he has not, and which he cannot acquire except by one particular means, which hitherto has been repugnant to him, he will understand nothing, and he will certainly not understand that he should be called upon to furnish what he does not possess. It is, moreover, established by the example of other colonies, as M. Cattier pointed out, that the hut tax or village tax engenders the worst abuses in the work of enforcement and recovery of taxes (on the extreme left, "Divide, divide").

There only remains for me, gentlemen, to explain the reasons for which the Government agrees with the Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert, and rejects that of the Hon. M. Masson and friends. I do not refer to the Resolution of the Hon. M. Colfs; I do not consider it as serious (laughter on the left and on the extreme left).

M. Colfs:—You refuse, therefore, to employ the only means which are efficacious!

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—The Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert, after having noted that the House "is imbued with the ideas which presided over the foundation of the Congo State, and inspired the Act of Berlin, renders homage to all those who have devoted themselves to this civilising enterprise." It goes without saying—I already drew attention to it in an interruption—that we place at the head of the persons thus referred to, the King-Sovereign, to whose admirable perseverance Belgium is indebted for this African conquest.

M. Bertrand:—Do not forget M. de Browne de Tiège.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I am not going to prolong the debate by replying to interruptions of that kind.

M. Lorand:—You are giving to the Resolution of M. Beernaert the character of a congratulatory Order of the Day.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—Thirdly, the Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert expresses confidence in the proposals which the Commission of Inquiry is elaborating, as also in the conclusions which will be given to them. The Government shares that sentiment, which covers both the Commission and the Congo State. Finally, gentlemen, the Government associates itself the more willingly with the Resolution considering that the Government itself is the author of the projected law of the 7th August, 1901, a discussion of which the Hon. M. Beernaert invites the House to consider as soon as possible. As for the Resolution proposed by the Hon. M. Masson and friends, the Government rejects it. First, because it does not contain that legitimate homage of which I have spoken; and also because the Government cannot accept a suggestion that we should claim from the Congo State the communication of documents, accounts and reports relating to the administration of a

† The deliberate mendacity of this and similar statements, in view of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, is truly remarkable.

State which is only responsible to itself. Just as the Congo State would hasten to furnish us with all details which might be useful, on the day on which we should be agreed to examine the question of immediate annexation, so it would refuse to consent to such an injunction (interruptions on the left). The Hon. M. Masson criticises sharply the fact that, by the law of the 7th August, 1901, Belgium renounced all right of control in the affairs of the Congo State. The Hon. Member forgets that this right was deprived of all efficacious sanction. Moreover, Parliament gave a thoughtful vote in 1901, and many hon. members of the Liberal left adhered to it: MM. Hymans, Huysmans, Lepage, Liefmans, Mullendorff, Van-de-Venne, Warocqué, and many others.

M. Bertrand:—They were wrong, that is all.

M. Hymans:—We explained our vote.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—We found ourselves, therefore, in numerous and excellent company. I close by asking the House to vote the Resolution presented by the Hon. M. Beernaert. ("Very good" on the right.) (Cries from all parts of the House, "Divide, divide.")

The Speaker:—M. Hymans is in command of the House.

Speech by M. Hymans.

M. Hymans:—I only speak in order to explain very briefly the motives for which I shall vote the Resolution presented by M. Masson. The position of Belgium towards the Congo State restricts in a singular degree the field of Parliamentary action. The Congo State is a free and Sovereign State. The personal union gives to Belgium no portion of responsibility, or of intervention in the management of Congo affairs. Far more than this, there does not exist between Belgium and the Congo any relation whatever, official or diplomatic.* So much so that in law, and in appearance, there is complete separation. In point of fact, the links, on the contrary, are intimate and close. The Government of the Congo has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium finds the capital for Congolese enterprises. The Belgian Government helps the Congo State to live, by lending it its officers, its diplomatists, its officials.

M. Bertrand:—And its millions!

M. Hymans:—So much so that Baron Van Eetvelde, then Secretary of State for the Congo State, wrote on the 28th March, 1901, "The Congo has become Belgian, in fact." Finally, on the death of the King, the Congo is destined to come to Belgium. Between facts and law, there is, therefore, a striking contradiction, and this contradiction is obvious each time that a debate takes place in this House on Congo affairs. This has been largely manifest in the present discussion. When we discuss Congo affairs here, the Government takes refuge behind the personal union, and declares itself

* Nevertheless, the Sovereign of the Congo State uses the diplomatic and Consular machinery of Belgium in favour of his Congo enterprise.

incompetent to reply. Immediately after, we see the same Minister, who has sheltered himself behind this *non possumus*, speak and explain himself, not as Minister of the Government, but as a Belgian and an advocate of the Congo State!

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—Do you deny me the right of speaking as a member of the House?

M. HYMANS:—Well, sir (addressing M. de Smet de Naeyer), I do not understand how the head of a Government does not realise how abnormal and shocking such a situation is.

M. WOESTE:—You would do the same thing.

M. HYMANS:—What do you know about it? But I would thank you not to interrupt.

M. WOESTE:—I am positive, because you could not do anything else.

M. HYMANS:—I said, therefore, that such a situation is abnormal and shocking.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—In opposition!

M. HYMANS:—It is dangerous for the Sovereign, whom it leaves without defence, to attacks from outside and from within. It diminishes the dignity of the Government, and it has this essential fault of reposing on a fiction which is contradicted by all facts.

M. WOESTE:—Everything in life is fiction! (Laughter on the left.)

M. VANDERVELDE:—There is an avowal!

M. HYMANS:—Yes, there are political fictions, which are possible on certain occasions, but when these fictions are seen through, they must be set aside. Fictions which break away at every point, which are in flagrant contradiction with facts, cannot be upheld. In 1901, upon the expiration of the Convention of 1890, Belgium had to pronounce herself on the annexation of the Congo, and I am convinced that if, at that moment, the Government had wished it, if it had shown energy, annexation would have triumphed. A movement in favour of it was manifested on the benches of the right and on certain benches of the left. Members of the left, admirers of the Congo enterprise, and sincere partisans from the start of colonial policy—I was amongst them, as also M. Braun and our regretted colleague, M. Baudouin—were in favour of annexation, whereas, on the right, M. Beernaert and several of his colleagues presented an annexation bill.

M. DELPORTE:—The King will not have it.

M. HYMANS:—However, these annexationist tendencies, with which many groups of the Chambers were animated, remained platonic. Why? Because there was a prior and essentially indispensable condition to any resolution on annexation, namely, the existence of legislation settling the *régime* to be applied to the Colony. This condition did not exist. The Government ought to have taken the opportunity of initiating such legislation, in order

to make the House free to give a decision on annexation. The Government got out of it, and the lack of all colonial law was the reason which the Congo State immediately invoked to oppose the project. The Congo State replied: "Belgium is not ready. She is not in a position to replace at the present time the existing administration." The Government having stood aside, Parliament was compelled to do the same. Under these conditions, we were compelled to approve a vote on the law which put an end to the *régime* contracted in 1890. We explained ourselves. It fell to me to say, in the name of my friends, in the name of those who had agreed to annexation, that the vote which we were giving was a vote of "resignation," and that the solution brought by the new law was in our opinion but a "provisional solution." Here are the words which I then used: —

"While blaming the Government for not having invested this matter, which affects the gravest interests of the country, with the energy, virility and sincerity it required, we resign ourselves to vote the project as being under actual conditions the only possible solution; a solution which in our view is essentially provisional."

M. VANDERVELDE: —It is none the less very regrettable that you should have renounced a control which you now demand.

M. HYMANS: —In the situation in which we found ourselves placed, it was impossible for us to realise our wishes, and, being partisans of colonial policy, we gave a vote of confidence under the reserves which I have just recalled. Well, the provisional cannot last for ever.

M. WOESTE: —It is only the provisional which lasts (laughter on the right).

M. HYMANS: —I desire very much, in the interests of Belgium and the Congo State, that the necessity of not prolonging the provisional shall be realised. Certainly, I do not hide from myself the difficulties of administering an equatorial colony, nor the complications which a Parliamentary intervention would bring about. But foreign legislations show us numerous kinds of colonial systems, which, while leaving to local Governments a large portion of autonomy and authority, nevertheless give way before consultative councils, and the supreme control of Parliament. Absolutism has been praised. Absolutism was, perhaps, necessary in the opening stages, during the period of foundation, where a powerful hand and single will were needed. This will manifested itself with an amplitude and with a tenacity which all the world has praised, and from which I, for my part, have never refused admiration. But, gentlemen, absolutism, even in Africa, and even were it exercised in a genial spirit, is not a durable system. Its highest mission at the present time would be to prepare the transition towards a system of carefully elaborated control, collaboration and publicity (applause on the left). The future must be prepared for, and that is why, in the two Resolutions which have been brought forward, on the right and on the left, we find this idea, in which all are united, even the Government, to discuss in the briefest possible time the projected law on colonial possessions, which was brought forward five years ago, and which, by reason of Government inertia, has remained bound to the wheels of the Parliamentary machine.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You would be better employed in criticising Parliamentary inertia. When the Government brings forward a project, it is with the hope and with the desire to see it discussed at an opportune moment, and it is for the House to hasten the matter.

M. HYMANS:—Gentlemen, the Chancellor of the Exchequer deposits a law on a colonial *régime*. He brings it forward in the name of the Government. He declares, in formal terms, to the Central Committee of 1901, even before the project is deposited:—

"The Government thinks it is necessary that this law should be voted in the briefest delay possible, as the events which can place Belgium in the position of having to utilise the possibility of annexation cannot be foreseen."

That is what the Government said in 1901.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—And the Government continues to think so.

M. HYMANS:—Then for five years the Government keeps silence! Have we heard upon a single occasion, in our debates during the last five years, the Government call to mind the projected law on the administration of the colonial possessions of Belgium, pointing out to the House its interest, its importance, its urgency? The Government has never held such language; it has done nothing to hasten the examination of the projected law; and, in truth, the Parliamentary slowness of which it seems to complain, to-day, corresponded with its secret desires* (applause on the left).

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I deny it absolutely.

M. LEONARD:—You have allowed the Central Committee to fall asleep.

M. HYMANS:—Moreover, the Government has a singular idea of the part it should play in this House. It is the business of the Government to look after our work; it is the Government's business, whether it is a matter of the Budget or of anything else, to direct the action of the House, to bring forward useful projects, to see that urgent and useful proposals which it has initiated should be examined and voted. That is especially the *rôle* of a Government imbued with the nature of its duties and its responsibilities.

M. LORAND:—Every time that it brings forward a proposal, which it really wishes to see voted, it does not allow us to forget it, at the price of a night-sitting, if necessary.

M. HYMANS:—The question to-day seems only to have a retrospective interest, since the Government is tardily full of zeal, and says that it is in agreement with the House to take up the examination of the projected law on the colonial *régime*. And the Resolution of M. Masson brings up another question. M. Masson demands that Belgium should be in a position to become enlightened on the economic, financial and commercial condition of the Congo State, in order that when the day dawns

* The King's command!

for annexation to be discussed, Parliament should come to a conclusion with a knowledge of the facts. The wish formulated by M. Masson corresponds with the desire of Public Opinion. The attention of the Public has been highly excited by the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. Important reforms are indispensable in the opinion of all, on the admission even of the Congo State, which brought about the inquiry, and which afterwards appointed a Commission to study and prepare the reforms. Grave problems have arisen, notably the problem of labour, which weighs upon all African colonies—that of taxation, that of the land *régime*. It would be rash, in my opinion, to profess to settle them by theoretical formulas. Absolute solutions are in all matters dangerous, and they are all the more dangerous where practical necessities, facts and contingencies dominate the situation. But there is one point upon which there is unanimous agreement between the Congo State, the Belgian Government, and the Belgian Parliament. The colonial system applied at the present time in the Congo contains serious defects, and calls for indispensable improvements. On that point, I repeat that this House is unanimous. The work of reform has begun,* and for my part I hope and believe that the Congo State will face necessities, and will fulfil all that Public Opinion demands. We ought not to be astonished, on the other hand, that Belgium desires enlightenment. She may be called upon, from one day to the next, to pronounce herself on annexation, and that is precisely why, in 1890, M. Beernaert promised the House a permanent inquiry, and regular information. I know very well that, to-day, thanks to the international position in which we are placed, Belgium has no rights towards the Congo State, and can demand nothing from it, but what we cannot demand, can we not ask in a friendly way? Cannot the Belgian Government, which every day lends its help to the Congo State, carry on friendly negotiations with that State, to obtain from it the necessary documents to instruct the House and Public Opinion in the interest of the Colony, as in the interests of Belgium. The Prime Minister has just answered in advance for the Congo State, that the latter will never consent to give satisfaction to such a demand; that its dignity would be opposed to it. Gentlemen, I do not think so. In what way would the dignity of the Congo State suffer, if its Government, upon the friendly demand of the Belgian Government, placed at the disposal of the latter the documents which were promised to it in 1890, thus allowing Belgium to become enlightened as to the commercial and financial situation of the Colony? I feel convinced, on the contrary, that such negotiations, carried out by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with the tact and ability which are habitual to him, are bound to succeed. Gentlemen, the responsibility of the Government is involved in this matter. It is for the Government to act. In acting it would not show any hostile or suspicious intention towards the Congo State, nor would such action amount to intervention. It would be carrying out an act of solicitude and forethought, calculated to prevent many future difficulties. I urge it very strongly to adopt the method which M. Masson has indicated. I am sure it will succeed. It is for these reasons, and in this spirit, that I shall vote the Resolution brought forward by my honourable friend (applause on the left).

* No—not on the spot.

THE SPEAKER:—M. P. Daens is in command of the House. ("Divide, divide." "Closure!")

M. VANDERVELDE:—M. Daens is in command of the House. It is too late to ask for the closure.

Speech by De Heer P. Daens.

DE HEER P. DAENS*:—You ought to sit here as great friends and great defenders of truth; whereas the truth about the Congo is persistently killed. The mouths of all the officials in the Congo are shut; silence is imposed upon the missionaries, and if they attempt to speak they are accused of being revolutionaries and democrats. By this means your capitalists have drawn millions and millions from the Congo. Nevertheless, notwithstanding everything, truth is piercing the clouds, and to-day you are compelled to admit that there are systematic abuses in the Congo. These are proved, not only by official documents, but by all the speeches pronounced here yesterday. We listened to M. de Smet de Naeyer. He wandered among his notes, and his words were produced with difficulty. He vainly tried to escape from the striking light of facts! He is blinded by his aristocratic ideas to such an extent that he dares to say that those who speak against the Congo are anti-patriotic, and enemies of civilisation. A magnificent civilisation, in very truth! M. Verhaegen spoke eloquently in congratulating the missionaries; but he forgot to say how they suffered in seeing their work crushed by the infamous conduct of European civilisers. We also heard the great hero, M. Woeste. He is fully informed of everything that takes place in the Congo; but he does not desire that the abuses should cease. M. Woeste knows of the evils which exist on the Congo, but he will not have any reforms. He did not end his speech by saying, "Institute an inquiry. Seek out abuses, and put an end to them." No, he ended by saying, "Continue, and do not listen to calumny!" Yesterday, again, in the course of the eloquent speech of M. Lorand, when M. Terwangne gave a fine homage to truth, we heard M. Woeste, like a schoolmaster, read a lesson to his young pupil. You seem to be of opinion, M. Woeste, that this immense colony can be oppressed in an inhuman fashion, in order to extract millions from it. And what do you make of religion? Did not Christ give to His Apostles other means of civilising and conquering the world? Are you ignorant of the fact that St. Amans and St. Lievien adopted quite different means to convert our country? Have you never read the bitter complaints of Christopher Columbus, at the sight of the exploitation and the horrors committed by the Spaniards? (Uproar, and cries of "Divide, divide," "Let M. Daens continue in French.") This will teach you to make fun of your native language (numerous voices: "To-morrow").

M. P. DAENS (speaking in French):—Can I continue my speech to-morrow (addressing the speaker)?

* M. Daens' speech was given in Flemish, and the above translation is a translation from the Flemish text.

THE SPEAKER:—Silence, gentlemen. The House has decided to finish the interpellation to-day. M. Daens is in command of the House. I would thank him to be good enough to cut short his observations.

M. VANDERVELDE:—Would it be convenient to declare the discussion closed, and to ask the orator to continue his speech to-morrow? (Protests on numerous benches.)

THE SPEAKER:—Two more orators are inscribed. I propose to hear them, but to postpone the voting until to-morrow at three o'clock. ("Yes, yes." "No, no." Uproar.)

THE SPEAKER:—Please retain your seats, gentlemen. M. Daens is in command of the House.

M. FLECHET:—Will the vote be given to-morrow or not, at three o'clock?

THE SPEAKER:—The vote will take place to-morrow at three o'clock. M. Daens is in command of the House.

DE HEER P. DAENS (continuing in Flemish):—Francis Xavier said that in the islands of the Indian Archipelago, where Spanish traders had passed, not a solitary human being was left. The European civilisers, by their thirst for gold and sensual pleasure, had plunged the natives into such a condition of degradation that the work of the missionaries remained sterile. Do you not fear, gentlemen, that the same state of affairs will take place in the Congo? And will not these unfortunate natives, tired of being oppressed and ground down, rise some day to throw off the yoke which oppresses them so cruelly, and kills them? I think it is a disgrace for the Conservative Party* to refuse to cause these abuses to cease; abuses pointed out on all sides, and to allow the Liberal and Socialist Parties to make themselves the vehicle of complaints. The masses of the people, which did not regard favourably this enterprise at the beginning, saw clearly and gauged the situation. You say that markets are required for Belgian industry and commerce. But these markets exist in the interior of our country. Open your eyes, and see the great number of families who are lacking in necessary food, and to whose interests you should devote in the first place your riches, to take them out of their misery, and put an end to their existence and privations. Not only is this talk of markets a flare of trumpets, but religion itself has dwindled more during the last twenty-four years of Conservative Government, than during the fifty preceding years. Open your eyes, and you will see in Brussels, around your magnificent monuments, beside starving families, and yet you come to speak to us of openings for Belgian gold. And all the promises which rich men make here on such occasions are, as always, vain promises. But the day will come when the light of truth will be thrown upon the Congo, and you will be plunged in shadow. For truth is comparable to steam, which, when compressed, acquires a stronger power. Beware of the explosion, for it will destroy you!

* *E.g.*, the Clerical Party.

Speech by M. Helleputte.

M. Helleputte:—Gentlemen, I do not intend to make a long speech. I had not put myself down as a speaker in the discussion, and I only intended to vote the Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert. The speech of M. Vandervelde compels me to take part in the discussion, and to make a few brief observations. It is necessary that there should be no doubt as to the significance of the Resolution, which we intend to vote. The Hon. Member told us that he could not agree with the part of the Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert which approves of all those who have devoted themselves to the civilising work undertaken in the foundation of the Congo State. He asked us, in this respect, if we intended to approve of all those who, under various conditions, and in various capacities, have participated in what has been done in the Congo. I hasten to say, No.. In referring to those who contributed to the "civilising work," we intend to make a profoundly clear distinction between those who have acted in the Congo with real civilising intent, and those who have been guilty or have been accomplices in the acts of cruelty which have been pointed out.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—This is obvious in itself.

M. Helleputte:—I hope that this declaration will suffice, and will re-assure all the Members of this House. I would add, moreover, that the acts of cruelty committed in the Congo do not appear to me to be only adherent in the individuals who have committed them. I do not think that Belgians are more cruel than people of other countries. I am convinced that they are less cruel. I think in other colonies acts as cruel, more cruel, and in greater number, take place.*

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—Quite so.

M. Helleputte:—That is no excuse for those who have committed the acts here denounced (approval on the extreme left).

M. Vandervelde:—That is the point.

M. Lorand:—Very good.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—Agreed.

M. Helleputte:—But this should ensure for us a certain amount of moderation in the attacks to which we are subjected to abroad, and I add that these acts of cruelty are not, in my opinion, merely the result of individual violence or vices, but that they are, in part, the result of the existing *régime* ("Very good" on the opposition benches).

M. Vandervelde:—That is the question.

M. Helleputte:—I am here compelled to reply briefly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject of coercion, and forced labour. The Hon. Minister endeavoured to make out that the

* In no colony, since the middle ages.

direct coercion which flourishes at the present moment on the Congo is analogous, with very little difference, to the indirect coercion which might result, for instance, from the introduction of a cash currency, and taxation in cash. The Minister is here confusing matters in a regrettable way, and I am astonished. Do you understand what indirect coercion would mean on the Congo if a currency were introduced, and if taxation was demanded in cash?† It would be merely the *régime* which exists here amongst us. Why do labourers work? Do not all people work who have not sufficient income? They are compelled to work, in order to earn sufficient to live. Those who do not know how to live without working, are compelled to work to live. They must work also to earn the sum of money which is claimed from them as a tax. Consequently, what the Minister calls a system of indirect coercion is simply the system which exists amongst us, and this system differs totally from that prevailing on the Congo.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You do not understand me.

M. HELLEPUTTE:—All the better. I am glad, and I shall be delighted to hear your explanations either to-day or to-morrow.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I shall at once clear away this misunderstanding.

M. HELLEPUTTE:—In any case it is beyond doubt that the disappearance of forced labour and of coercion must be demanded by everyone, and that if it cannot for grave reasons be immediately suppressed, everything must be done to suppress it as soon as possible (applause on the opposition benches). Gentlemen, the Hon. M. Hymans, defending the Resolution brought forward by the Hon. M. Masson, justified in excellent terms the Resolution brought forward by the Hon. M. Beernaert. I take the liberty of pointing this out to him. M. Vandervelde had already declared that he was in agreement with the first part of the Resolution of M. Beernaert, reading as follows:—

"The House, imbued with the ideas which presided at the foundation of the Congo State, and inspired the Act of Berlin, etc."

I congratulate the Hon. Member, and I hope that the whole of the House will endorse this part of the Resolution of the Hon. M. Beernaert. But M. Hymans justified two other parts of the Resolution of M. Beernaert, and precisely the two parts by which this Resolution is distinct from that of M. Masson. M. Hymans, not following in this respect M. Vandervelde, said that he had confidence in the measures which would be recommended by the Commission of Reforms constituted by the Congo State, following the conclusions of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. Now, this is precisely what the Resolution of M. Beernaert contains:—

"In view of the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry instituted by the Congo State, expressing confidence in the proposals which are being elaborated by the Commission of Reforms, as also in the results which will follow therefrom . . . ."

This is the Resolution of M. Beernaert. What does it mean? It is clear in the eyes of all that it means that the House

† How can the Congo native pay his tax in cash, when he owns nothing, has nothing to sell in order to acquire cash?

admits that reforms are indispensable, that they must be accomplished as soon as possible, that the House hopes that the Commission of Reforms will demand all the necessary reforms, that these reforms will be realised. Why, then, does not M. Hymans agree with the Resolution of M. Beernaert?

M. VANDERVELDE:—What is much less easy to understand is how the Government can agree to that Resolution, after the explanation given thereupon by M. Beernaert, and by M. Helleputte himself (laughter on the extreme left).

M. LORAND:—If the Resolution of M. Beernaert has the significance which is attributed to it by M. Helleputte, the Government cannot agree with it.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I indicated very clearly the significance of this Resolution, which the whole of the right is prepared to vote, and which was communicated to me before it was brought forward (uproar on the extreme left).

M. LORAND:—You are clearly equivocating. You agree with the Resolution of M. Beernaert, because you know that the House will vote it. But you would not dare to ask from the House a Resolution which would express your thoughts. That is what is necessary should be known.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—I repeat, my declarations have been quite clear.

M. LORAND:—You are speculating on an equivocation. The Resolution of M. Beernaert is opposed to all the explanations you have given. The interpretation which M. Helleputte gives to that Resolution proves it.

M. HELLEPUTTE:—The Hon. M. Lorand is going, perhaps, a little too far.

M. VANDERVELDE:—A little! (Laughter on the extreme left.)

M. HELLEPUTTE:—If a complaint might be made against M. Vandervelde, it would be that it would have been better to have waited, before bringing forward his interpellation, for the Commission of Reforms to have published its conclusions. In telling him that, I do not wish to say anything which is disagreeable. A few days' patience would have sufficed.* We should have been in a position to gauge the situation, but until the Commission for Reforms publishes its conclusions and its labours, and seeing that, according to the newspapers, it is in agreement with the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry—this has not been denied—I do not really see why the House should not say that it has confidence in the proposals of the Commission of Reforms, and that the results given to them will be in conformity with what the situation demands.

M. VANDERVELDE:—The Commission of Inquiry maintains forced labour.

* This and similar declarations show that M. Helleputte has not yet gauged the tortuousness of the Congo State. The above statement was made on the 1st March. The Report is not published as we go to Press.

M. Hellepute:—The second part of the Order of the Day of M. Masson, as to which I desire to say a word, is as follows:—

"Seeing that, before any discussion on the eventual annexation of the Congo, Belgium should be in a position to appreciate all the consequences which might result from annexation, without prejudging the principles of the latter, and that in this respect it is especially necessary that the Government should demand from the Congo State the communication of all documents and reports calculated to enlighten Parliament, etc. . . . ."

It is obvious, gentlemen, that we are all in agreement with the thoughts expressed in the above statement. Everyone in this House desires to be enlightened in the most complete manner before passing an opinion upon the annexation of the Congo.

M. Vandervelde:—Let us say so then.

M. Carton de Wiart:—Would not this be the means of obtaining nothing?

M. Lorand:—Information will not be given.

M. Hellepute:—We are, therefore, all in agreement thereon, and this desire meets with no opposition on any bench in this House.

M. Lorand:—On the Ministerial bench?

M. Hellepute:—No,* but the Hon. M. Masson tells us that the Government must "demand."

M. Masson:—Do you prefer "ask"?

M. Vandervelde:—Let us say "ask."

M. Hellepute:—My hon. colleague, your Resolution bears the word "demand." I did not draw it up.

M. Hymans:—I referred in my speech to a friendly negotiation.

M. Hellepute:—Precisely. You spoke of a negotiation. We must therefore not "demand," but "ask." M. Hymans recognised this also, and that is why I said just now that when he defended the Resolution of M. Beernaert, which has the great advantage of demanding nothing, but of permitting the House to ask for everything, and under much better conditions, and with a much better chance of success than under the conditions defined by the Resolution of M. Masson. The Resolution of M. Masson begs the Government to demand from the Congo State the communication of all documents, accounts and reports of a nature to enlighten Parliament. This is a very vague formula. I have more confidence in the Government than the Hon. M. Masson. The latter will admit, however, that he is leaving it entirely to the Government and to the Congo State as to the documents which shall be furnished. Is that what he wants? In my view, it is the House which ought to indicate what are the precise data which it desires to obtain, and for that it has only to follow the regular course. That course is this. We are face to face with the project of the Government

* The words in the text are "*mais non,*" and it is probable that M. Hellepute meant to infer that even the Government was not opposed to being enlightened.

for the colonial possessions of Belgium. This projected law has been sent to Committee. The Central Committee is constituted. It is this Central Committee of delegates from all parts of the House which must ask the necessary information from the Government. It is for it to ask the Government to dissipate all abuses, to throw light upon all obscure points. Following this course, we are certain to succeed. I hope that M. Hymans and M. Masson will recognise it. The conclusions of this debate would have a far more considerable significance if the Resolution were voted unanimously by the House, instead of being voted by a majority, or a minority.

M. Woeste:—I demand to be heard (voices on the left, "Oh, oh!").

M. Helleputte:—Note well, gentlemen, that there is no dispute on the substance. There could be none. I have just shown that the form of the Resolution proposed by M. Beernaert responds better to the feeling of the House than the Resolution of M. Masson. That is why I beg all members of this House to vote the Resolution of M. Beernaert.

M. Vandervelde:—With the comments of M. Helleputte.

M. Lorand:—Yes, with those comments.

M. Mabille:—It is in that sense that it must be voted!

The Speaker:—The Chancellor of the Exchequer is in command of the House.

Speech by the Premier.

M. de Smet de Naeyer:—I regret that M. Helleputte so misunderstood me as regards the question of forced labour. First of all, this is what I said on the subject at the sitting of the 16th July, 1901:—

"What are the taxes imposed upon the Blacks? If they are the native contributions to the expenses of the public services which are being organised with a view to the social and economic formation of the country, in a policed country, this contribution takes the form of imposts. But in the Congo there can be no question, at the present moment, of direct or even indirect imposts, for the simple reason that there is no acquired wealth, nor interior exchange of wealth, nor cash currency, apart from the small foreign population, and a few commercial enterprises which pay taxes in money. The Congo is in the position of all new countries, where, in the beginning, the impost is paid by forced labour. A day will come when the natives will pay the impost in currency, and I do not know if they will not complain more then than they do now."

My hon. colleague for Foreign Affairs, on the 2nd July, 1903, expressed himself on the same question as follows:—

"In connection with the Tilkens affair, the Hon. M. Vandervelde criticised the action of the State towards the natives. He found it outrageous that forty hours labour per month should be imposed upon them.* But, gentlemen, the ideal placed before us here is an eight-hours day, and the duration of labour of forty hours per month does not represent more than an hour per day. Moreover, the Hon. Member, after having affirmed that this was a forced tax, recognised that it was paid."

* At the time that M. de Favereau made this statement, the law of forty hours' labour per month did not exist, even on paper! It was only promulgated in November, 1903. Upon its arrival in the country, the Commission of Reforms found that forty hours per month was represented in practice by 280 days *per annum*. A party of missionaries, who have just returned from an itinerating mission in the Upper Maringa, have found this "law" to mean 24 days out of every 28 spent in the forest, getting rubber. They have so reported to the Governor-General (April, 1906).

Finally, in my speech yesterday, I said that forced labour was only a transitional stage, and that the native will learn to work voluntarily for the satisfaction of needs which he will have created for himself. I am, therefore, far from considering a forced labour tax as a normal and definite system. But I noted, in accordance with the Hon. M. Carton de Wiart, and the Commission of Inquiry, that under the actual circumstances it is the only way in which taxation can be levied upon the natives in the Congo.

M. HELLEPUTTE:—That is not the point which I took up.

M. VANDERVELDE:—But the labour tax is not a tax. Call it by its true name, the *corvée*.

M. LORAND:—The rubber *corvée!*

M. HELLEPUTTE:—The only point which I took up was this. You said that between direct and indirect coercion there was only a shadow of difference. Now, there is an essential difference. That is what I pointed out. I did not say anything else.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER:—You placed yourself from the point of view of the customs of a civilised nation. My point of view was quite different. Speaking of the book of M. Cattier, I said that the latter, while condemning direct coercion, especially on the Congo, in connection with the labour tax, recommended a system which evolved, necessarily, into labour-coercion. The native at the present time cannot retain money, since he obstinately refuses to work without being compelled.* When his education shall have been made, and he has created needs for himself,† it will be possible to establish a tax in cash, although up to the present the capitation or the hut tax has brought about a thousand difficulties in collection in the colonies where it has been applied. I did not make the apologia of the *corvée*, but I affirmed its necessity, at least for the time being.

Speech by M. Woeste.

M. WOESTE:—Gentlemen, I wish to say a few words on the subject of the Resolutions, and principally in reply to the considerations which have been brought forward by M. Helleputte. The hon. member expressed the wish that the Resolution should be voted unanimously. That is undoubtedly my wish, and it is even to be desired that in all matters Resolutions should be voted unanimously (laughter). But there are fundamental divergencies of opinion between the signatories of the Resolution of M. Masson and the partisans of the Resolution of M. Beernaert. I heard just now, while M. Helleputte was speaking, M. Lorand interrupting and saying that we were confronted with nothing but equivocations. Now the only equivocation which exists lies in the circumstance of the signatures placed at the foot of the Resolution of M. Masson by members of this assembly, who have made contradictory comments. Thus we heard, a moment ago, M. Hymans praising the Commission of Inquiry, and hoping that the Com-

* Thoroughly characteristic mendacity.

† He has been robbed of everything, and has no right to sell or to buy. How then can he create needs for himself? He has nothing to trade with, yet he is declared to be idle. He has nothing to work for, yet he is declared to be amenable only to coercion.

mission appointed by the Congo Government would bring about positive and happy results. Nevertheless, one of the signatories of the Resolution of M. Masson, M. Vandervelde, in the course of his speeches, has stated that we can have no confidence in the Commission, because the Congo State is incapable of reforming itself.

M. VANDERVELDE:—I demand to be heard (interruption on the part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer).

M. WOESTE:—There is the equivocation. The different members who are disposed to vote this Resolution, have made speeches with regard to it which show complete disagreement, and astonishment is expressed that, under these circumstances, we do not agree with such a Resolution! As for the Resolution proposed by the Hon. M. Beernaert, comment upon it is to be found in the speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of M. Beernaert himself, of M. Carton de Wiart, and of myself. It seems to me that the explanations given in this respect show very clearly the character of that Resolution. Having said so much, I return to the Resolution of the Hon. M. Masson, and I find that it contains a sentence which has just been discussed by the Hon. M. Helleputte, and which shows complete disagreement with those who are disposed to subscribe to that sentence, and those who reject it. M. Helleputte has just said that he does not adhere to the portion of the Resolution in which M. Masson invites the House to demand or to claim documents . . . .

M. HELLEPUTTE:—I do not admit the *claim*.

M. WOESTE:— . . . from the Congo State. I associate myself in that respect with his position, but I do not associate myself in the least with the motives which the Hon. Member has given for the rejection of this portion of the Resolution of M. Masson. I think it necessary to draw the attention of the House to the true character of the Resolution of M. Masson, which I am referring to at this moment. We are asked to say that it is necessary for the Government to demand, or to ask, if that be preferred, for the communication of all documents, accounts and reports of a nature to enlighten Parliament. Well, supposing that the House does that, that the Government agrees with it, and that it asks for details from the Congo State. Supposing that the Congo State refuses these documents. In what position will the Government be? In what position will Parliament be, which provoked the Government to make such a request?

M. VANDERVELDE:—And what will be the position of the Congo State towards Belgium?

M. WOESTE:—Gentlemen, there are situations which a Government and Parliament cannot accept, because they are contrary to its dignity, and the situation which it is desired to bring about, and which would be possible, would be such a one. But I go further, and I assume that the Government of the Congo State gives a favourable reply to the demand of the Government, and that it communicates to it all the documents asked for, what will the House do with those documents? The House has not before it a proposal for annexation, as I have shown; it is not offered at this moment. Is the House going to discuss, in the abstract, documents of a State other than the Belgian State? This is

obviously unreasonable. We cannot ask the House to vote a proposal which can give rise to no practical result, and which involves, moreover, an infringement upon the rights of a foreign State. M. Hellepute gave the opinion, in closing, that the proper thing to do is for the Central Committee, which has been appointed to examine the projected law relating to colonial possessions, to see if it is necessary to demand from the Congo State the documents in question. I do not quite see at first sight how a Committee of the Belgian House could thus enter into relations with a foreign Government.*

M. Mellot :—That is not the point.

M. Woeste :—I do not quite understand either how the Belgian Government can claim documents from a foreign Government.

M. Mellot :—We are agreed there is no question of demanding them, but of asking for them.

M. Woeste :—But, my dear colleague, you have not listened to me, because I have just shown what would be the consequence of such a request if it were not granted, and the position would be absolutely the same in the circumstances which I have just detailed. It is manifest, moreover, that the projected law **is a general proposal on the colonial possessions which Belgium might acquire one day, and that it does not aim directly at the Congo State.**

M. Hymans :—Here is an equivocation. The Government categorically declared, when it brought forward the project of which you speak, that this project had in view the Congo Colony, and was brought forward in regard to the royal succession being open.

M. Vandervelde :—That is shown in the preamble.

M. Woeste :—There is no equivocation in what I say. It is true that the project was brought forward in view of the annexation of the Congo; but it is none the less true that it is of an absolutely general character, and that its object is to regulate the position of all colonial possessions which Belgium might acquire. Moreover, the debate on the latter point is premature. It is obvious that the Central Committee could demand from the Government details on the subject of the projected law; but I wish to establish in a few words that I cannot in any way agree with the considerations, of too absolute a character, which M. Hellepute has put forward (voices from all parts of the House, "To-morrow").

M. Vandervelde :—I demand to be heard.

M. Lorand :—We cannot go on under such conditions. Let us postpone the sitting until to-morrow.

The Speaker :—We have now come to the discussion of the Resolution.

M. de Smet de Naeyer :—The House decided that the discussion would be closed to-day.

M. Verhaegen :—And that we should vote to-day.

The Speaker :—Pardon me.

M. Lorand :—What is the use of taking decisions, if they are not to be kept?

* M. Woeste, in short, is prepared to back the King, to prevent or delay annexation, by any and every means possible.

M. DE SMET DE NAEYER: —I insist that we should finish to-day. I am compelled to assist at a debate in the Senate to-morrow.

THE SPEAKER: —M. Vandervelde, for the third time, has asked to be heard.

M. VANDERVELDE: —I am not going to speak for more than sixty seconds, at most.

THE SPEAKER: —You are in command of the House.

Speech by M. Vandervelde.

M. VANDERVELDE: —I wish to refer to a passage in the speech of M. Woeste. He maintained that the Resolution, which I countersigned, is based upon an equivocation, because, says he, M. Hymans, who proposed to vote it, has confidence in the Commission of Reforms, whereas I, on the contrary, have no such confidence, or in the results which might be given to its decisions. I should understand the objection of M. Woeste if the Resolution of M. Masson stated that we had confidence in the Commission of Reforms; but all it states is that we await the effects of the measures undertaken by the Congo State.

M. WOESTE: —That is the equivocation.

M. VANDERVELDE: —It is quite natural, after the speech which I made, that I shall vote the Resolution of M. Masson, which I countersigned.

M. LIEBART (Minister for Railways, Posts and Telegraphs): —What is less natural is that the Liberal group should vote it (laughter).

M. VANDERVELDE: —I speak in the name of the Socialist group, but if you interrupt me I shall exceed my sixty seconds. What is less natural is that the Government should agree with the Resolution of M. Beernaert, especially after the comments which have been made thereon by M. Helleputte. M. Beernaert, indeed, refers to the principles of the Act of Berlin, and it is a secret for no one that the policy followed since 1892 is absolutely opposed to the feelings of the Hon. Minister for State. The truth is, therefore, that what the Government is about to do is to sign its own condemnation, in order to avoid a more explicit condemnation.

Speech by M. Colfs.

M. COLFS: —Gentlemen, the discussion which has taken place between the two Resolutions presented by M. Beernaert and M. Masson seems to show that neither of them can be accepted (laughter). M. Woeste has just said that it is inadmissible that the Belgian Government should ask questions from the Congo Government, even to enlighten the debates on the subject relating to colonial possessions, without the risk of placing itself (in case of a refusal on the part of the Congo State) in a position which would compromise its dignity. The proposed law on the government of the colonies has led to a great number of questions among the members of the Central Committee. The latter will be compelled to put these questions before the Government, and we, therefore, know in advance that the latter will not be able to submit them to the Congo State.

M. Woeste : —I am ignorant of the questions which have been put forward in the Committee. The Central Committee will have to deliberate on them.

M. Colfs : —These questions relate to the whole administration of the Congo, and the most important of them will necessitate demands for documents and details from the Government of the Congo State. But the Government will be unable to answer these questions, for fear of receiving a negative reply. What use, therefore, under these conditions, is an immediate discussion of the projected law asked for by the two Resolutions? In view of these two facts, there is only one practical conclusion possible to this interpellation, namely, that we must take steps to compel the Congo State to conduct itself in a more humane manner than it has done up to the present. That is the reason why I brought forward a Resolution which, without intervening in the administration of a foreign State, decides that our men, our soldiers, can no longer lend their services to the Congo State, as long as the necessary reforms have not been realised. To do so we shall not have to make any demands liable to rejection. All we shall have to do will be to oppose a categorical refusal to the Congo State until it has come to its senses.

Speech by M. Beernaert.

M. Beernaert : —At the opening of the sitting, and when very few members were present, I enunciated the conditions which seemed to me to justify my Resolution. I did so thoroughly, and clearly. I think I have nothing to withdraw, nor to add to what I said, but I cannot but thank M. Helleputte for having suggested that my proposal should be approved by the whole House. M. Woeste thinks that there is contradiction between the speeches of M. Helleputte and mine.

M. Woeste : —I did not say so.

M. Beernaert : —Have you not just said so?

M. Woeste : —I said that your comments upon the Resolution differed.

M. Beernaert : —M. Helleputte contends that the Central Committee instructed to elaborate the organic law might ask from the Government details on certain aspects of Congo affairs. I should see no inconvenience therein. M. Helleputte evidently does not mean that the Central Committee should exact this information. There would only be a question of asking, through the intermediary of the Belgian Government, for enlightenment which might seem useful.

M. de Smet de Naeyer : —We are all agreed thereon. The thing is obvious.

M. Beernaert : —I thought so, and, on the other hand, we are not called upon to instruct the Central Committee as to how it should proceed.

M. Woeste : —That is evident.

M. de Smet de Naeyer : —Every day we receive demands from Foreign Governments for information, with which we hasten to comply. But that is merely a question of courtesy, apart from any

injunction, and reserve is made in case of grave inconvenience. Under these conditions, the Congo State would certainly hasten to assent to the demands which we might have to ask.

M. BEERNAERT:—We are, therefore, agreed. There was only a simple misunderstanding.

M. HELLEPUTTE:—Gentlemen, the Hon. M. Beernaert has just expressed in excellent terms what I wished to say. On the other hand, the Hon. M. Woeste having agreed with the point of view of the Hon. M. Beernaert, further comment is needless.

THE SPEAKER:—The debate is closed.

FIFTH DAY'S DEBATE (March 2nd).

THE RESOLUTION—STORMY SCENES.

After some discussion, the President informed the House that he proposed to put to the vote the first portion of the Resolution of M. Beernaert, viz.:—

"The House, imbued with the ideas which presided over the foundation of the Congo State and inspired the Act of Berlin,"

The above was adopted unanimously.

The President then said that he intended to put the following portion of the Resolution:—

"renders homage to all those who have devoted themselves to this civilising work."

The above sentence was also adopted.

The President then intimated that he would put the following sentence to the vote:—

"And, seeing the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry instituted by the Congo State, confident in the proposals which the Commission of Reforms is elaborating, and in the consequences which will be given to them,"

This was also adopted.

The President then intimated that he intended to put to the vote another sentence, common to both Resolutions, reading as follows:—

"and decides to proceed without delay to the examination of the projected law of the 7th August, 1901, on the government of the Colonial possessions of Belgium."

This was adopted unanimously.

The President then intimated that he intended to put to the vote the two following passages in the Resolution of M. Masson, which differed from the Resolution of M. Beernaert:—

"Considering that before any discussion on the eventual taking over of the Congo, Belgium must be placed in a position to appreciate all the consequences which might result from

annexation, without pre-judging the principle of the latter, and that, in this respect, it is especially necessary that the Government should demand from the Congo State the communication of all documents, accounts, and reports calculated to enlighten Parliament."

Many members thereupon called out, "ask."* The President pointed out that he had not been informed of the amendment. Thereupon ensued a confused and passionate discussion as to whether the rules of the House allowed of the word "ask" being substituted for the word "demand," after the closure had been pronounced, in view of the fact that no request had reached the Speaker in writing. Finally, the Speaker seemed to waive the question of procedure, and asked the House whether there was any opposition to the substitution of the word "ask" for the word "demand." The Premier and Chancellor of the Exchequer (M. de Smet de Naeyer) thereupon declared that he did oppose such a substitution, and a violent tumult was the result.† In this attitude, the Premier was supported by M. Woeste, and his opposition, apparently, rendered the substitution of the word impossible.

147 Members took part in the vote on that portion of the Resolution of M. Masson. There were 86 Noes and 60 Ayes, with one abstention. Majority, 26.

Thereupon the Speaker put M. Beernaert's Resolution to the vote, in which 134 members took part, there being 80 Noes and 54 abstentions, various members explaining why they had abstained. The Speaker thereupon put the Order of the Day of M. Colfs, reading as follows:—

"The House, considering that grave abuses take place in the Congo, considering that notwithstanding reiterated promises they have not been remedied, considering that it results from the Report of the Commission of Inquiry that 'officers commanding expeditions against the natives have thought themselves at war, have acted as though they were at war. and that that was the intention, moreover, of their chiefs,' without the superior authorities having even dissuaded them from doing so, calls upon the Government to suspend the authorisation to Belgian officers to go to the Congo until a new state of affairs has been inaugurated compatible with the dignity of the Belgian army, and passes to the Order of the Day."

119 Members took part in this vote. There were 88 Noes, 26 Ayes, and 5 abstentions. The Members who abstained gave reasons for doing so. This closed the proceedings.

FINIS.

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* Instead of "demand."—See fourth day's debate.

† It seems unnecessary to reproduce here the personalities exchanged between hon. members.

Books and Pamphlets

By E. D. MOREL.

"Affairs of West Africa"* ... ... *(Heinemann) 1903*

"The British Case in French Congo" ... *(Heinemann) 1904*

"King Leopold's Rule in Africa"† ... *(Heinemann) 1905*

"The Sierra Leone Hut Tax Disturbances" *(Richardson) 1900*

"Trading Monopolies in West Africa"
(A protest against territorial concessions)... *(Richardson) 1901*

"The Empire's Cotton Supply" ... *(Richardson) 1903*

"The Congo Slave State" .. ... *(Richardson) 1903*

"The Congo State and the Domaine Prive"
(African Society) 1902

"Les Concessions du Congo"
(Questions Diplomatiques et Coloniales, Paris) 1903

"La Question Congolaise"
(Questions Diplomatiques et Coloniales, Paris) 1904

"The Economic Development of West Africa"
(Reprinted from *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*) *1904*

"The New African Slavery" ... *(International Union) 1904*

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"The Scandal of the Congo" .. ... *(Richardson) 1904*

"The Treatment of Women and Children
in the Congo State" ... ... *(Richardson) 1904*

"The 'Commercial' Aspect of the Congo Question"
(African Society) 1904

"Evidence laid before the Congo Commission of Inquiry"‡
(Richardson) 1905

"The Congo Millions—what becomes of them?"
(Richardson) 1905

"The State of Affairs in the Congo to-day" *(Richardson) 1906*

"A Belgian Indictment of the Congo State" *(Richardson) 1906*

"The Report of the Congo Commission of Inquiry"
(Richardson) 1906

"Red Rubber" ... ... *(Richardson) 1905*

"Another Belgian Indictment of the Congo State"
(In preparation) .. .. *(Richardson)*

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* French Edition *(Challamel, Paris)*. Translated by A. Duchêne, Chief of the African Bureau at the French Colonial Office.

† American Edition *(Funk & Wagnall, New York)*.

‡ Also a Belgian Edition and French Edition *(Le Congo Leopoldien*: Pierre Mille and E. D. Morel).

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